

THE ARGOSY.

SEPTEMBER, 1899.

THE TOWER GARDENS.

By L. ALLDRIDGE.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ALISON IN HER ELEMENT.

BY Sunday morning the winds and rain had abated, a cold leaden sky hung over the City, a cold drizzle filled its deserted streets.

On that dull, grey Sunday, Arthur Bayliss awoke earlier than usual to a consciousness of extreme wretchedness. He rang his bell furiously, but on Sundays Mr. and Mrs. Robbins, his caretakers, were not early risers ; so he had to ring several times and wait long before John Harbuckle's Mr. Robbins' brother William, who answered to the name of Jim, made his appearance ; and longer still before Mrs. Jim had made that cup of tea without which Arthur Bayliss felt that on such a morning he could not face life.

This prolonged waiting afflicted Mr. Bayliss with the most heart-rending sorrow as well as with the direst impatience. When at last Mr. Jim Robbins appeared, he heard a few remarks which showed that absence from his native land had not affected Mr. Bayliss's power of using the vernacular.

After that outburst of wrath, Arthur Bayliss felt quite spent, and as if he should sink through the floor ; but the remembrance of Jessie's face, worn and pale as he had seen it last night, roused him to action.

He had not heard of the fainting fit. Jessie, poor child, as soon as she could speak, had begged so piteously :

"Don't tell my father ! Don't tell my father !"

Her anxiety had been so wholly to spare him distress that the others had been obliged to say nothing. Jessie, however, had looked so unlike the bright girl he had taken to the theatre that it was but natural her father should that morning wish to see her again as early as possible.

Arthur Bayliss had therefore a sufficient reason for getting up and

going out. He knew it was about the worse thing he could do ; but he was in the state of body and mind in which a man is compelled to make a martyr of himself and—although tortures would not make him admit as much—of everyone else. So that a very slight cause would have made him feel that it was as important for him to go round to Trinity Square as if his life or Jessie's depended upon it. He dressed himself with great difficulty in his warmest clothes and went out.

It is inconceivable that anyone in London that morning was really comfortable ; certainly Mrs. James Bayliss was not.

She was cold, indeed shivering, but she looked at the Japanese umbrella and the pots of ferns in the dining-room grate, and could not resolve to have them removed ; it was so absurd to light a fire in July.

"Of course, in the North we had our fires laid all the year round, but in London it is too ridiculous !" she said.

"Oh, auntie," said Jessie, shuddering with cold, "my father will be here soon and he's sure to want a fire. Do have one lighted !"

"Well, but you'll be going to the Temple or the Abbey ; we'll have one lighted after church," said Mrs. Bayliss, who did not like to give in. "Really you ought to be a little heroic ! One should learn how to stand such trifles !"

"I don't like trifling discomforts," said Jessie, "they wear you out, and then you haven't strength to bear heavy troubles. I don't like them at all. Why shouldn't we be comfortable ?"

But Mrs. Bayliss was resolute.

Presently her brother-in-law arrived.

"Good heavens, Mary ! What an ice-house !" were his first words. "Jessie, are you mad that you're sitting in this well ? What do you mean by it ?"

"Arthur ! you're very ill !" exclaimed Mrs. Bayliss, noticing his sunken eyes and yellow skin.

He answered by lying down on the sofa with his face to the wall, in an attitude of physical prostration and mental despair that frightened Jessie, and softened her aunt's heart.

Mrs. Bayliss was too experienced a woman to be alarmed ; but she was touched ; for it would seem that the sight of a man lying with his face to the wall appeals strongly to feminine sympathies.

Queen Jezebel, we may remember, was by no means a tender-hearted woman, yet when her lord came home and laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, she at once set her wicked wits to work to help him.

Men sometimes take a mean advantage of this well-known feminine susceptibility. A sensible woman, however, is careful to discriminate between real suffering and a fit of sulks, and while for the first she has nothing but tenderness, the second she leaves to cure itself, lest,

at some unguarded moment, she should be tempted to throw something hard at the recumbent head.

There was no question as to the reality of Arthur Bayliss's misery. With half a glance Mrs. Bayliss recognised the symptoms, for in a milder form her late husband had had similar attacks.

It was almost amusing to see how she changed at once, how thoroughly she understood her business, and threw herself heart and soul into it. In less time than it has taken me to write this page, she and the girls had the Japanese umbrella and ferns out of the grate, a fine fire roaring in it, the sofa drawn up as close as possible to that fire, and Arthur Bayliss snugly tucked up in an eiderdown quilt, with Jessie sitting by his side, looking pale and very much alarmed.

Then they all subsided into a profound quiet. Mrs. Bayliss took up her station with her feet on the fender and turned to the Psalms for the day; Jessie sat quite still with one hand on the quilt; but there seemed nothing for Alison to do. She was not particularly anxious; her father's attacks had always passed off in a few hours, so she thought that as she did not seem to be wanted by anyone she might as well go to church; and she whispered as much to her mother.

Mrs. Bayliss, who was now in a most delightful temper, nodding assent, Alison stole softly from the room, shutting the door behind her very noiselessly.

As Alison went with hushed step upstairs, an idea occurred to her; it was the result of her feeling for once quite free and her own mistress.

She had secretly cherished a certain wish ever since she had been in the City; but hitherto she had not found herself at liberty to carry it out.

She wanted to see the City churches; a great many of them—all of them, in fact—not only the attractive ones, most of which she had already seen, but the scarcely known rank and file.

On other Sundays she had either gone to St. Paul's or to the Abbey, or to hear some great preacher, or with her mother to lovely St. Olave's, or with John Harbuckle to the King's Weigh-house Chapel, where her uncle was a Church member, and where her grandfather had been a deacon for many years. Coming or going when she had happened to be alone with John Harbuckle they had sometimes looked in for a moment at different churches they had passed; but Alison's wish to see all the churches in the City was as yet far from being gratified; and, indeed, there are a very great many to see.

"I'll go to-day," she said. "I'm all alone; I shall never have a better chance! It's not absolutely raining, although it certainly has 'a tear in its eye.' I'll put on my winter jacket, and go."

I may tell you, while Alison dresses, that, with a few exceptions, the City churches were then difficult of access. Alison had already spent

much time and many shillings in hunting up sextons and keys. Once the only name and address on the church door had been the churchwarden's. When she had found the place, it turned out to be a teabroker's counting-house, and she had not liked to go in. Another key she had traced to a large boot-shop.

Entering, she found the bootmaker fitting a gentleman. She asked, innocently enough, for the key; but the man looked at her as suspiciously as if she had been a well-known burglar, and said there was a lot of plate in the church and he could not trust her. She had begged for someone to come with her; but he said he could not leave his shop and had no one he could send; so she had to give up that key altogether.

She had also tried lingering in churches after week-day service (for she was a devout girl, and did not like to look about her during prayers or sermon), but as a rule the sexton or sextoness was in a most terrible hurry to shut up and get home; so that was not very satisfactory. When she had gone in early it had not been pleasant to steal about on tip-toe while others were assembling for worship, or perhaps already on their knees; but on the whole, she thought, the best way would be to go out and see two or three churches as soon as they were open and take her chance for the rest. There was in those days no way of seeing the City churches that was not more or less repugnant to a religious mind; but this seemed to be the least so.

In a very few minutes Alison had on her thick jacket and a little black bonnet that damp could hardly injure, and was feeling eager to leave the house and plunge into her own element. The house was oppressive to her; she was needing change.

She had given Jessie a great deal of unobtrusive sympathy; it had told upon her.

She stole silently downstairs. A death-like stillness filled the house. The empty hall with its closed door looked quite different on Sundays from the busy entrance she saw on week-days.

She opened one leaf of the heavy double door and went out. Not a creature was to be seen anywhere.

The trees had suffered much from the gale; pieces of boughs strewed the walks of the square gardens.

A perfect buzz of bells greeted Alison's ears; she stood for a minute on the doorstep listening to them. Some were quite near, some but a little further off, others more and more distant; there were bells overhead, bells all around, bells of all sorts and sounds from Aldgate's full-pealing gamut to the solitary tinkle of some water-side mission-hall among the docks: bells everywhere and innumerable, suggesting to her that she was standing in the centre of a vast circle of sound, the circumference of which stretched away miles and miles all over the country; bells from London's City to Land's End and John o' Groat's.

Alison stopped to listen. It was not often she came out alone,

and one can hardly enjoy listening when in company. She thought of some lines she had copied a few days since from old Capgrave the Chronicler, and which she had been singing about the house to the Eighth Gregorian tone :

“Blessed Ynglond, full of melodie,
Thou may'st be yclepp'd of Angel nature ;
Thou servest God with such busie cure !”

Presently she went on to the corner of Barking Alley and looked towards the Tower. The great space of the hill was empty, wide and very desolate.

She turned into the churchyard under the shadow of the gigantic warehouses. The shops were closed ; not a living being but herself and a wandering cat was to be seen ; the old church, with its three low aisles and its quaint open belfry, looked as rural as if deep buried in some country village, while from that belfry there came a soft pathetic chime, that seemed to mourn over and over again, with many a minor cadence :

“My City's dead,
Dead my City ;
My folk all fled :
Pity !—Pity !”

Ah me ! I should dearly love to follow Alison in her wanderings among the churches ; but it would take too long—besides, it might not be interesting except to a few. So I must tear myself away. I see her going into Barking Church to look at the grand sword-rests on the Aldermanic pew. I see her crossing Tower Street to St. Dunstan's ; I see her stopping there, and reading a tender little inscription on a tablet enshrining the pious, childish, last words of a little girl of six. I see her—but no, no ; I must not go with her, and yet how much I wish I could !

Alison had been into more than a dozen churches before she found herself, about two hours later, in the neighbourhood of the Herald's College, Queen Victoria Street, with her face again towards Tower Hill and her mind filled with grand organ-tones, white surplices, more or less well-chanted psalms, decorous pulpit utterances, poor stained glass, fine old dark woodwork, fighting lions, gilt unicorns' horns, and very small congregations—congregations so small that, in one instance, from the door, which she cautiously pushed ajar, she could see no one but the clergyman and the pew-opener.

It was a curious experience, painful upon reflection, but at that time she thoroughly enjoyed it. Not that she, after all, saw the churches well, for though it was easy enough to do so before service, as soon as it had begun, the gloomy lobbies were so zealously guarded that a hasty glimpse was often all she could obtain.

The last church she entered suddenly took her back to Scotland and the Reverend Andrew Baird.

It was as plain and, I must add, as ugly as his at Kirkhope. A clergyman in a black Geneva gown and bands like Mr. Baird's, was addressing five persons from a high pulpit a long way off. The sermon seemed a good one, the preacher so like Mr. Baird, that she almost expected to hear him pray, "Bless and prosper the church of our fathers, the Church of Scotland." Alison stayed a few minutes to listen, and then quietly slipped away. This was, of course, shocking, but what else could she do under the circumstances? "Dear old Birrendale! Well, I've only just time to get home now," she said, as she came out and caught sight of the clock projecting from the church wall. In a few minutes she was in Queen Victoria Street, where for the first time since she had left home she felt uncomfortably alone and unprotected.

The broad new thoroughfare, on other days so handsome and so eminently respectable, looked really quite disreputable now. It was not deserted as the lanes had been; gangs of men walking very fast as if to catch trains or boats, hurried by her: they all looked very rough and uncouth. The well-to-do artisan was no more to be seen than the banker or merchant.

Alison felt most uncomfortable, walked as fast as she could, and was thinking that perhaps she had better take a cab, when just before she turned from Queen Victoria Street into Cannon Street a familiar form came in sight, a form as different from the roughs round as Sunday in the City is from a Birrendale Sabbath.

Mac? No, not Mac, but Mac's cousin.

"It can't possibly be Alec Carruthers!" she said; "and yet it must be either Alec or his double."

The figure was a few yards in front of Alison, and getting over the ground with that long even swing peculiar to those whose next-door neighbour lives five miles off; the steady stride of a man used to getting along country roads.

"It is Alec! What had I better do? Perhaps he can tell me about Mac! Anything would be better than this horrible suspense! I must run or he'll be gone."

He was going along Cannon Street, gaining ground rapidly; there was no time for deliberation; so, heedless of everything except the chance of taking news to Jessie, she ran and soon came up to him.

"Mr. Carruthers!" she exclaimed, stopping just behind him, flushed and half out of breath.

He turned at once.

"Miss Bayliss! I—I—was hoping to—I thought perhaps I might meet some of you," he answered, in a curiously vague and uneasy way.

Alec Carruthers was looking in very much better health than when Alison had seen him last, but his flush, as he spoke, was still too delicate. It was a troubled flush, and his eyes were troubled too.

"I am very glad I happened to see you," said Alison; but she felt as if there was an uncomfortable awkwardness between them.

"Yes; so am I," returned Alec, but with more decided uneasiness.

It was evident that both knew something was wrong, but that neither was at all certain what next to do or say on the subject that was occupying the mind of each. They walked a few steps in silence.

"Isn't it sad about poor Mac!" began Alec presently, in a very grievous voice.

"Sad? What has happened?" asked Alison hurriedly.

"Don't you know?"—and he paused an instant—"he's been nearly killed! Indeed, we don't know yet whether he will recover," said Alec, with pathetic directness.

"Nearly killed! We didn't know!" said Alison, under her voice, greatly shocked.

"You didn't know! That's what I wanted to find out," said Alec, as if addressing himself.

"But tell me—how did it happen? What is it that has happened," demanded Alison. "Poor fellow! I was certain something dreadful must have happened!"

"I don't just know," said Alec, more vaguely than ever. "I don't know quite the beginning of it, but as he was going down the Strand on Wednesday morning with Donaldson of Landyke, an omnibus horse, in struggling to start, cast a shoe, and it struck the poor fellow just here," touching the side of his own forehead. "Saved the temple only by a fraction of an inch!"

"Is he horribly hurt?" asked Alison, with a shudder, looking up at Alec.

Alec turned slightly away, seeming much troubled.

"They thought at first it would be fatal. Donaldson telegraphed to us at once. We all came South by the next train. We have him in some rooms in Craven Street, Strand."

"How frightful! Is he conscious?" asked Alison. "Poor fellow! We have been wondering all the week what could have happened; we've had a dreadful week!"

"Have you really?" said Alec; but there was so much genuine sympathy in Alison's tone and face that it made him hate the suspicion in his own as soon as the words had passed his lips.

"Really?—of course—really! Why do you ask?" said Alison, with indignation.

"Hasn't she found another admirer?—your cousin, I mean," asked Alec, as if groping about in the dark.

"Everyone admires her, of course! I don't know what you mean. I don't understand your allusion," said Alison sharply.

"There isn't a rival?" asked Alec.

"No!" replied Alison, putting as much point-blank emphasis into the syllable as it could possibly be made to bear.

"Then there's just a miserable mistake somewhere. I told poor Mac I was certain there must be!" said Alec, looking still very distressed and anxious, for he was exceedingly attached to his cousin and very unhappy about him.

"Mistake! Of course there must be, if he can think such nonsense as that!" exclaimed Alison. "I've been telling Jessie all the week I was certain there was a mistake somewhere; but she won't believe me. She thinks he has left her—forgotten her—forsaken her."

"Left her! Why he's mad about her! It was not until this morning he was able to tell me. I knew something was on his mind. I was worrying myself to find it out, I couldn't think what had come to him. He told me this morning; he raved about her to me; he said he didn't care to get better, that he wished he'd been killed outright. He seems just broken up about her, poor fellow. I didn't know what to do—I was sure he was wrong, but I didn't know what to do, so I just wandered on down here. I thought I should like to speak to you about Mac—but I didn't know whether to do so, so I just wandered on and on and came down here."

"But—but—but—" stammered Alison, "I don't understand it at all. He must be delirious."

"I don't think so; he was clear enough on other subjects. He declared to me he saw her with his own eyes with another man, who seemed very devoted to her, and whom, he says, he is sure she was encouraging. He saw them together at the theatre."

"At the theatre! Oh, that explains it all," said Alison. "We have only been once to the theatre since we have been in London, and that was last Tuesday. We went with a relative of ours whom we had not seen for some years; he was the rival, I suppose."

"I suppose so. I suggested as much to him. I said, 'It might be a relative,' but he said she hadn't any man relative left."

"He was mistaken," said Alison curtly.

"I'm very glad to hear you say so," said Alec.

"Why," said Alison, her voice trembling with indignation, "Jessie fainted dead away in my arms yesterday! She'd been waiting for Mac ever since eleven on Wednesday, the time he promised in his last note to come; she was worn out, poor darling, with suspense, and she just fainted dead away. I felt I could have killed Mac, when I saw the poor child so broken down! We ought to have been told—you ought to have sent to us; you can tell that to Mac if you like; perhaps it will do him good. Why should he think such nonsense? He ought to believe in Jessie; of course he ought! I can't understand people being so fond of each other (as I suppose they are) and not trusting each other at all!"

"I suppose they can't help it," said Alec simply.

"There's perhaps something in that," said Alison drily.

"I really think there must be," returned Alec, as if pondering the

subject. "One's people are a very great anxiety, aren't they?" he added. "I made them all anxious last year, and now I've got well there's poor Mac."

Alison thought there was something very sweet and gentle about her companion as he put the question. She sighed a little in response.

"Would you like to see Jessie and tell her?" she asked a moment or two afterwards.

"I would far rather leave it in your hands," he answered, as if frightened at the bare idea. "I will send you a bulletin by the evening post, you will get it first thing in the morning."

"You think he will recover?"

"I hope so. They seem to think he will. My dose of medicine will, I imagine, do him a great deal of good." He paused. "We shall be able to arrange this little affair, sha'n't we? We will make it come right."

"I don't see that it needs arranging," said Alison. "A little common-sense is all that's needed, but that's a gift people never have, under certain circumstances. I'm very glad I met you, because Jessie frightened me so much yesterday when she fainted away. It was quite by chance I happened to come this way. I thought I would like to look at a good many of the City churches; that is why I'm so far from home."

"This is the City?" asked Alec, interrupting her, and gazing around him.

"Yes; but it looks quite different on week-days. It's shabby and dirty now; it's very different on other days. This is Eastcheap."

"Eastcheap! How delightfully Shakespearean! Where's the 'Boar's Head?'"

"We've passed it, or rather the sign that does duty for it; and we've passed London Stone," said Alison.

"What a pity! Will you show them to me some day?" asked Alec.

"But you don't really care," said Alison brightening. "I can't show such things to people who don't care. I should be afraid of boring you."

"You wrong me; just now we are both too anxious—but, as a rule, few subjects interest me more. I've never been before into the City; I was just wandering down, you know, feeling, somehow, that I was getting nearer to you, and puzzling my brains what to do about poor Mac and your cousin, hoping something would turn up. I'm so glad we happened to meet."

But anxious as they both might be, they were both interested in the piece of road between King William's Statue and the Tower.

Alison very greatly preferred Alec Carruthers to poor Mac. He was, it must be admitted, as intelligent a listener as she was a talker; and how great is the gift of listening!

"You think poor Mac will get better?" Alison asked, when at last they stopped before the house in Trinity Square. "Won't you come in and talk to them about it, all? I really think you ought to do so."

"Do you object to my leaving it in your hands?" asked Alec nervously. "Do you know, I couldn't face Jessie unless—unless I were obliged. Pray take it out of my hands. You don't object?"

Alison thought of Arnold Birkett and said:

"No—oh, no! I'll break the news to poor Jessie. You will be sure to write, won't you!"

"Yes, I'll make it right with poor Mac. He was going to rush down here in a state of frantic jealousy when the accident happened! It was about half-past ten on Wednesday morning. Donaldson insisted on Mac's going a little way down the Strand to look at some particular sort of bag he wanted. Mac was to go with him and to hurry down here the moment after the thing was chosen, when the accident happened. Donaldson was in an awful way about it; so he had need to be, for I believe Mac is about his last chance. It's astonishing what a hold the poor fellow has gained over him in so short a time."

"But tell me—we needn't feel anxious about Mac, need we?" asked Alison kindly.

"I suppose we need not feel anxious," returned Alec gravely. "Unfortunately—I speak for myself—we can't help it, you know. Good-bye. I'll be sure to write. I'm so glad I met you; it has taken quite a weight off my mind."

"And off mine," returned Alison. "Only I can't help asking myself: 'How will she take it?'"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW SHE TOOK IT.

MEANWHILE the Sunday morning passed slowly and heavily to my poor Jessie. There she sat, still as a stone, with her hand resting on the quilt which covered her prostrate father, her gaze towards the window and the leaden sky beyond, her heart benumbed with dull misery.

After the first few minutes, she was not even alarmed about her father. She looked once or twice at Mrs. Bayliss placidly reading by the fire, with her feet on the fender, and Topsy, the black cat, purring beside them, and knew she need not be frightened.

Presently, when the room grew warmer, her father moved, took her little hand between both his own broad palms, kissed it, and holding it to him, as he had often held Jessie's own self when she was a little child, fell asleep.

It was her left hand ; her right arm she placed on the head of the sofa and rested her brow upon it.

She felt strangely weary. Her father's mute caress of her hand aroused her a little from the numbness that had been enfolding over her and made her long to weep her very life away ; but she wept not, only sat quite still, with her head bowed on to her arm that rested on the sofa.

"Last Sunday, what ages since last Sunday!" she thought. "How young I was last Sunday, and now I feel so old, so old! Last Sunday it was hot and bright. The sun shone. Uncle John took us to St. Paul's. How happy we were! Last Sunday I was sure Mac loved me; I thought of him in St. Paul's and thanked God! It was like being in Heaven."

Her breathing came and went hurriedly, but no tears fell. Then a burning flush overspread her cheeks.

"I let him win me too easily! He saw from the first how much I cared for him! Lightly won; lightly lost! I daresay he even despises me for it now! I despise myself!"

And a thousand trifling words and acts rushing back to her mind filled her with shame; she would have given her life, she felt, to have recalled them, poor girl! And yet how simple, how innocent, how sweet those very words and deeds had really been!

It took her a long while to get away from this sense of wrongdoing on her own part, but at last it was combated by the sense of injury and wrongdoing on Mac's part, which again was fought by a desire to defend Mac even from her own suspicions.

Her father had said Mac would be "a cad" to leave her so; and, in spite of all, Jessie felt that her father had used a word that never could, under any circumstances, be truly applied to Mac; even Alison, who had never cared for Mac, had declared he was the soul of honour. What then could have become of Mac?

So Jessie sat with her hand in her father's caress, and her head bowed on the sofa, ringing these miserable changes until about half an hour before Alison's return. By that time Arthur Bayliss had had a refreshing sleep and had got thoroughly warm. He awoke in comparatively good spirits, and was able to leave the sofa for an arm-chair by the fire. It was one of those old arm-chairs that used to be so sacred in their owner's eyes. They were sacred, however, no longer, for their well-worn leather had given place to new, and their individuality was, for John Harbuckle, destroyed—gone for ever.

In one of these old arm-chairs Arthur Bayliss sat and smoked an excellent cigar. His cigars were always most excellent; his beloved briar-root he reserved for his own room, rarely smoking it in company. Mrs. Bayliss liked his cigars—her Captain had been a great smoker. John Harbuckle, on the contrary, had a rooted aversion to tobacco in any form, and I am sorry to have to confess that his sister despised

him for it. She had a contempt for men who did not smoke—they were not like James Bayliss.

"John, pray don't let Arthur know you hate tobacco! Poor dear fellow, he seems to have forgotten it!" Mary Bayliss had already said in warning tones.

But on this Sunday morning as soon as Arthur Bayliss's cigar was fairly lighted (in which operation Jessie assisted), Mrs. James Bayliss, after she had brought one of her brother's very oldest and best beloved little *cloisonné* trays for the cigar ash, had the good feeling to retire and to leave Jessie and her father alone.

Jessie's father drew her on his knee as soon as Mrs. Bayliss had gone, and put his arm round her waist.

"That suicide on Friday gave me an awful turn," he remarked. "I wonder how his wife and children feel this morning? Ugh!"—shivering—"it doesn't do to think of it."

"Has he left many children?" asked Jessie, her great hazel eyes softening with compassion.

"Five! Eldest only nine!" returned her father between whiffs that appeared to afford him genuine satisfaction.

"Poor little things!" sighed Jessie. It seemed to her at that moment as if she herself and all other bereaved women and children formed a section of humanity quite apart, quite separate from ordinary mortals who were not suffering special affliction.

"Jessie, child, you are not half glad I've come back," said Arthur Bayliss.

"I can't feel very glad about anything just now," said she, turning her head away sadly.

"Well, we must look for that fellow, I suppose. Hasn't he relatives we can write to?"

"Not for the world!" exclaimed Jessie. "I'd sooner die ten thousand times over!"

"But I can't have you making yourself ill, I can't have you worried, you know. I can't stand it," said Arthur Bayliss. "You can't imagine what I feel when I see you looking so ill!"

"I—I—won't let you see me looking ill," said Jessie, with a painful flush. "Don't talk about it! Oh, pray don't talk about it!"

"Well, well, I won't, my darling! And look here, don't trouble yourself about my affairs; they'll come all right. I'm not hurt by this panic; on the contrary, I've managed to fall the right side of the hedge. How would you like to go to Madeira with me next winter? I shall have to go somewhere warm. I can't stand this awful climate!"

"Next winter's a very long way off," said Jessie. "Perhaps I shall like to go; perhaps——" and she broke down. "Perhaps I shall be in my grave by that time," she meant.

"Alison's late," she went on presently, rousing herself and glancing

at the clock. "Alison's a curious girl—don't you think so?" she asked by way of changing the subject.

"Aunt Mary's quite right," said Arthur Bayliss. "Alison's a genuine Harbuckle. Don't you see the likeness between her and Ceres and the Shepherdess hanging up there? She's a genuine Harbuckle. I shall never take much interest in her. She's not one of my sort."

"Never mind, Uncle John is very fond of her. They get on wonderfully together. You have me to take an interest in, you know," said Jessie, with a wretched attempt at vivacity. She turned her face a little aside as she spoke.

"There now! Keep still! What a likeness!" exclaimed her father in a tone of genuine pleasure, passing the tips of his fingers lightly over her cheek and chin, and looking at her with great admiration. "How strongly you remind me of a daguerreotype of myself as a very young man. Ah, now it's gone! You are my own, aren't you, darling? I saw myself, as I was once, in you just then."

"Yes, yes, I belong to you," and Jessie hid her head on his shoulder and cried a little, a very little; then, making a desperate effort, she drew him on to talking about Africa, a subject upon which, if he were once fairly started, it was not easy to stop him. Jessie listened; she heard him going on and on about natives and palms—huts and fevers and silent rivers, but all the while it sounded like:

"For ever, together; together, for ever."

Through Birrendale—never! Through Birrendale, through Birrendale—never! And so it kept chiming through her brain until—

"At last!" she exclaimed, slipping off her father's knee. "At last there's Alison!"

"Daddy," she said, "they're going to lay the cloth; you'd better be off to the drawing-room. You'll find a grand fire there, and also Aunt Mary. I'm going to look after Alie."

"I'm not pining for Aunt Mary's society," said Arthur Bayliss, who was reluctant to leave his comfortable quarters.

"But," said Jessie, taking hold of his arm as if to lift him up, and dropping her voice and nodding mysteriously, "you'd better go to her, you know. She'll like you to go—that is, she expects attention, and wise people find it best to give it her. Aunt Mary and poor Uncle Jim were very kind to me. What would have become of me without them? Workhouse, I suppose," and she shrugged her shoulders and raised her eyebrows. "Oh, forgive me, forgive me! I didn't mean to say anything cruel. Please—please let me go!"

She went to the top of the stairs to welcome Alison, as if that cousin of hers had been absent for at least a week. She was, I suspect, already longing—all unknown to herself—for a girl to speak to.

"Weel, ye're just a guy!" she exclaimed, dropping into the Birrendale intonation as Alison appeared from behind the baize door.

"A guy am I?" said Alison (thinking, "I hope not, but there's one comfort, he would never notice it"). "Neat, at any rate?" she asked aloud.

"Oh, yes, neat. But what's neat?" asked Jessie with much and undisguised contempt.

"Then never mind the rest," said Alison, and, pausing on the stairs, she looked up at her cousin as if Jessie were a picture, and then said, with a fervent admiration as undisguised as Jessie's contempt, "You, madam, are looking very, very pretty, prettier than anything else I've seen since I've been out." Indeed, Jessie, standing there, the fire warmth still on her face and such light as there was falling from the window on to her russet head, Jessie, standing there at the top of the dark panelled staircase before a background of John Harbuckle's blue china and broad-leaved plants, was a very fair sight to see.

"That's not saying much. Everything must look hideous to-day," returned Jessie, for one brief moment pleased with the compliment. Then she turned away abruptly. "What's the good of it? Mac's gone," she felt in her heart. "I might as well be ugly!"

"Come upstairs at once, Alie," she whispered. "Don't let my father see you in those dowdy old things—he won't like them."

The two girls went upstairs.

"I've been into more than a dozen churches," said Alison, when they were in their own room.

"How thankful I am I wasn't with you," returned Jessie.

"You are mistaken; you would have been very glad," said Alison gravely—so gravely, that her cousin's own expression changed at once.

"You've seen him," exclaimed Jessie, scanning Alison's face, every muscle of her own rigid with sudden tension.

"I have not seen him. I have seen Alec. Sit down in that easy-chair. Don't look like that, dear, there's nothing to be frightened about."

"Oh, make haste! Make haste!" Jessie implored.

"You have been thinking very wrong thoughts about poor Mac," said Alison, taking a chair near Jessie's, and laying her hands with a gentle control upon her cousin's, as if to keep her from starting up. "I told you, Jessie, you were wrong about Mac, and so you were, and it appears that he has been thinking just as wrong thoughts about you. No, no, dear, sit still, I'll tell you as quickly as I can. You remember the theatre on Tuesday?"

"Yes, yes, ages ago. What of it?"

"He saw you: he was in the stalls."

"Alison! Oh!" with a cry of despair. "And he saw my father?"

"Of course he did! Sit still! Sit still!" and Alison pressed her hands firmly over Jessie's.

"Where is he?" asked Jessie, trying to rise.

"In London. Alec says he is not very well—nothing to be frightened about, he hopes; but——"

"He's dead!" exclaimed Jessie, the look in her eyes almost making Alison herself break down and cry.

"No, no, Jessie. He's alive. You are going to be brave, dear?"

"Yes! Oh, go on!" cried Jessie, with piteous entreaty.

"He has met with rather a bad accident," said Alison. "On Wednesday morning he was coming here; he was obliged to go a little way with Mr. Donaldson first, a little way down the Strand, when an omnibus horse cast a shoe that struck him. Fortunately, it just spared the temple, so it is not so serious as it might have been."

"It might have killed him!—and I've been thinking such horrible things! Oh, what am I to do? Why didn't you make Alec come in? I could have asked him questions! Oh! to think that Mac might have died while I was thinking those horrible thoughts about him! And he saw us at the theatre; and he has been wretched about me! What could he have thought?"

"I've made that right with Alec! Of course, as people in love never have any common-sense, he at once jumped at the conclusion that you were encouraging someone else, and was frantically jealous. However, Alec will settle that matter. They have come from Scotland to look after him. It will be all right."

"But I must see him this minute!" said Jessie, rising as if half mesmerised.

"Come, Jessie, come, come! you are going to be brave!" said Alison soothingly, rising too, and taking her cousin's arm.

"Yes, yes. But I must get used to it first. It's so sudden!"—she pressed her hands against her forehead—"Alec can't be back there yet; can he be? He can't be with Mac yet?"

"Hardly yet. He was going to take a cab; he will be there very soon."

"And poor Mac still thinks I could flirt with someone else! How could he think so? How little he knew me!"

"Well, you know, it must have looked very much like it!" put in Alison.

"It must! So it must! And what wicked things I've been thinking, and Mac might have been lying dead all the while! I can't forgive myself. I've been too wicked!" cried Jessie, wandering aimlessly about the room. "Oh! he may die. Supposing he shouldn't get well, I should hate myself for ever—for ever and ever! I should never have any rest any more!"

"Oh, but he will get well," said Alison. "There's every reason to hope he'll get well very soon."

"But I must see him! When are they going to let me see him? Why didn't you make Alec come in? You never do the right thing," said Jessie testily.

"Alec is going to write this evening. You can't very well call before you hear from them. Mother, no doubt, will go with you to-morrow."

"To-morrow! It's easy enough for you to say to-morrow; to-morrow's an age away. How am I to live till to-morrow?"

"I thought," said Alison, "you would have been thankful for anything rather than suspense."

"Don't you call this suspense? I wish you'd go away, you cold-hearted creature! I don't believe you're a human being at all."

"Very likely not; very likely not," said Alison drily, putting away her hat as she spoke.

"What do you mean by letting Alec go without my seeing him? I could beat you! I could beat you!" repeated Jessie, and she dealt Alison several little blows with her small clenched hands.

"I asked him in. I asked him several times; but he was afraid of facing you! Come, be reasonable, be reasonable, Jessie. How could I help it? Come, leave off beating me!" and Alison seized Jessie's wrists firmly.

"Reasonable!" cried Jessie, struggling in her cousin's grasp. "Do you think I've no more heart than you have?—you stone, you icicle! Tell me every word he said. Begin at the beginning, don't leave out anything. You ought to have insisted upon Alec's coming in," and Jessie, getting free, threw herself down on the bed, and listened, with all her faculties wide awake enough now, while Alison conscientiously began at the beginning and went straight through.

"If Uncle John were only at home?" sighed Jessie, when Alison left off. "There are all of you in the house, and I just feel as if there were nobody here—nobody that's of any use to me now; you're all so unfeeling—so stupid! Uncle John would have gone off at once, and seen for himself how Mac really was! Oh, he'll die! He'll die!"

"Not he," said Alison. "If the accident wasn't fatal at once, it isn't likely to be fatal at all."

Jessie turned away and was silent for a few minutes.

"Alie, I didn't mean to be so hard on you; you meant to do the best, of course," she said presently, with a quaint little mixture of penitence and patronage.

"Oh, never mind me; that's of no consequence; I'm nobody, I have no feelings—nothing hurts me; indeed, I rather like to be insulted and beaten by you. Well, I'm going down to the others now. I must tell them, I suppose."

"Yes, they'll have to know. Don't let any of them come up and worry. I'm getting all right, only it was so sudden. I do wish Uncle John were at home! Alec was sure Mac was going to get well—quite

sure? You don't look very certain. How I wish Uncle John were at home! He has sense and feeling—nobody else has; you're all so many blocks of stone, all of you!"

If only the "bird of the air that carries the voice" would have taken that wish to poor John Harbuckle then, pacing by the sad grey sea in a depressed and melancholy mood, how they would have cheered him. But I fear that bird of the air is a capricious fowl, much given to telling treasonable matters—such as the private cursing of a king or a rich man by the democratic grumbler—and thinking a wish like Jessie's beneath his notice. The gulls cried with a noise like the creaking of fir-trees in a storm; but "that which hath wings," the mysterious bird in the air, brought no crumb of comfort to John Harbuckle on that cold, dull Sunday, as he looked seaward, wondering with tender pity whether Jessie had yet heard of Mac, and feeling, not without a keen pang of jealousy, that Arthur Bayliss was in all probability at that very moment occupying one of his arm-chairs, beside his own sacred hearth.

"I can't rise to it," he said dolefully. "I ought to be glad he's come back; but it's no use, I can't rise to it!" and he felt himself but a low and grovelling creature, as he slowly shook his grey head.

He had been singing, half an hour before this, with such voice as he had:

"Give me the wings of faith to rise,"

but he was only too conscious that he was still on an earth which just then presented to him a remarkably dull and leaden appearance.

Poor John Harbuckle! Could he but have known that Jessie had wished for him. But he did not know; he only felt that another man had taken possession of his home and of all the feminine hearts that beat therein. For once in his life John Harbuckle felt very nearly homeless; for what is home to any man of fifty unless he can himself reign supremely there?

Only a few moments could Jessie, lying on her bed in the old house in Trinity Square, give to anyone except Mac and herself. No sooner had Alison left her than all her heart cried out, while the most lovely rosy light beamed over her face:

"Oh, Mac! Then you do care for me after all? You haven't gone away. No, you care for me" (even to herself she was chary of the word, "love"); "you care for me, dear, you care for me! And I am very fond of you, I am indeed! If I could only see you—if I could see you! Oh, Mac, you ought to have known I meant always to be good to you! Why did you believe your eyes? Why didn't you believe me? Oh, Mac! my dear! my dear! So you love me, Mac, after all!"

And Jessie, anxious as she was, felt that Mac would be obliged to

get well for her sake ; but she longed to see him with an unutterable longing that seemed as if it must break through all forms and all proprieties and go to him

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW HE TOOK IT.

How Jessie Bayliss would have scorned the idea that on this earth there lived another human being to whom Mac Carruthers's life was of more vital importance than it was to her !

If we could possibly look at Jessie for a moment as a girl in whom we took no special interest (which is, of course, absurd), we might say, as we should of another girl under such circumstances :

"Well, if Mac should die, Jessie is young and pretty, and the thing that hath been is that which shall be ; she may find another Mac, whose Christian name may be something else. It will be hard for her at first—but one consoles oneself for the departure of Ulysses, you know, even if he depart for the Better Land. We are not all so constant as Mary and John Harbuckle—(Mrs. James Bayliss was a Harbuckle, you remember)—and Jessie is, as we have said, young, pretty and *not* a Harbuckle ; for such as she there are always many lovers. Poor darling, we are sorry for her, but time is a great consoler, especially to youth."

This view, common-sense almost to the point of being brutal, has, however, something that recommends it to the practical person ; young lives *do* recover from very terrible blows ; therefore I venture to hint, although Jessie (whom I would not hurt for the world) would never forgive me if she heard it, but I can depend upon its being kept from her—although Jessie, I repeat, would never forgive me the heresy—that at that minute when Jessie was longing to see Mac, with such feverish anxiety, there lived a man and a woman, a man and a woman to whom Love had come tardily, and to whom Mac's recovery—for which both were hoping with the profound gravity with which one watches beside the dying—was absolutely a matter of life and death.

The man was Donaldson of Langdyke ; the woman, the patrician to whom he was engaged.

Love at twenty and love at thirty are two very different things. The woman who loved Donaldson of Langdyke was a noble woman, in character, position, everything ; why she, who in her first youth had cared for no man, loved him, no one could tell ; but so it was ; she loved him.

They were both very wealthy ; they had no need to wait, as poor creatures like Mac and Jessie must wait. As soon as they were engaged, Donaldson had hurried on the marriage arrangements ; but

a week or two before the appointed time (it was on the happy day that Mac and Jessie drove through Birrendale) she had found out that the man she loved was an habitual drunkard.

"I cannot marry a drunkard; we must part," she said, her heart crushed with a sense of loathsome degradation.

"Can you doom me to hopeless perdition?" he pleaded.

No, she could not; she held out hope. He swore to reform.

Then he met Mac, and Mac at once acquired a certain mastery over him. Donaldson felt he had put his life into Mac's hands; he clung to him as his last chance; he made a desperate effort at reformation. But Mac had been struck down by his side; the cry he gave, when he saw Mac fall, sounded, as he recalled it to mind, at once like a yell of despair and a fiendish shout of triumph at regained freedom.

On that dull, grey Sunday morning, when the leaden sky hung over all the South of England, during the time that Alec Carruthers was driving from Trinity Square to the Strand, Donaldson of Langdyke was sitting by Mac's bedside, nervously pulling at his own sandy moustache. He had spoken a few words when he came in, but Mac had passed a bad night and had dropped off into an uneasy doze.

Mac's forehead was so bandaged that there was but little of it to be seen; the merry twinkle had faded out of the eyes, and those eyes were covered by lids that now and then twitched with pain. Mac's power to control even his own nerves was, for the time, gone.

So Donaldson of Langdyke sat by the bedside nervously pulling his own sandy moustache, while, poor wretch, two fierce passions fought for mastery over him.

He loved that woman who loved him with all the strength that was left to him. She was not far off; in twenty short minutes or so he could have been with her.

If Mac had been well he would simply have said, "Let us go," and they would have gone; Mac would have taken him safely to her; but now, with Mac lying there prostrate, he knew that to go to her was utterly and hopelessly impossible. Only so short a distance—and all his better nature craved piteously for a sight of her—but he knew it was hopeless; the two warring passions were unequally matched; love was but a stripling in the strong grasp of his craving for drink; Heaven and Hell were nothing to him then. He saw her, as he sat there nervously pulling at his moustache by Mac's bedside; he saw her praying for him with strong crying and tears; he felt his own heart weeping over himself: he glanced at Mac's pale, sleeping face, the firm eyes that had controlled him were closed, and Donaldson rose up noiselessly and stole out of the room. But he never saw the woman who loved him that day, for so strong, so irresistible had been the craving that possessed him, that it seemed could he only have

gratified it by trampling over her dead body or his own dead soul, he could not have held himself back from it. And yet in his heart he wept for himself and his ruin.

Mac presently opened his eyes; Donaldson had gone. Mac understood what had happened.

"It's as well, perhaps, that I can't get up," said Mac, "or I might do the same! What's the use of anything, now Jessie's false! How can I ever believe in truth and goodness again? And to dare to write so sweet a letter only the very day before! Why didn't that horse-shoe kill me? I don't see the remotest use in living. Not the remotest! Not the remotest!" he repeated, and went over and over again with the same doleful iteration until the scene in the theatre, of which every waking minute was full, grew confused and then faded away once more.

After a while Alec came in; His mother was resting on the sofa in the hired drawing-room, his father was out.

Mrs. Carruthers would have been a good-looking middle-aged woman had her complexion been less rough and red than it was. She wore a simple black cashmere and a becoming lace cap.

"You're late, Alec!" she said. "You'll not have been to Crown Court then?"

"No, I've just been down to the City," returned Alec, with deliberation.

"To the City! On a Sunday!"

"Ay!" said Alec, extracting as much sound out of the syllable as a German gets out of his "So!" And then he paused, as if in uncertainty.

"You'll have been to Tower Hill?" asked Mrs. Carruthers.

"Ay!" ejaculated Alec, at even greater length, taking a chair as if he had a whole day to do it in.

"And you'll have seen some of those Bayliss people?"

"Ay!" assented Alec.

"Did you call at the house?" asked Mrs. Carruthers.

"I just met Alison Bayliss by chance," said Alec, with a slow sing-song intonation.

"You met her—and whay-ere?" asked his mother, with half-a-dozen h's in the long-drawn "where."

"Just beyond St. Paul's," answered Alec, slowly and dutifully.

"And you had been to service at St. Paul's?" continued the cross-questioner.

"No," said Alec, "I was just wandering along, thinking of poor Mac. I was just wandering."

"And what had Miss Bayliss to say for herself?"

"She had been looking at churches and was going home, so I just went along with her," chanted Alec, innocently enough. "Is Mac awake, mother?"

"No, he'll be sleeping now."

"I have something to tell him," said Alec, with the same slow gravity with which he had spoken all along.

"You had better not agitate him yet awhile; he'll be needing rest, poor fellow!"

"I have some good news. It may quiet him."

"You'll have seen that Jessie Bayliss then?"

"No; but I saw Alison Bayliss, and we talked a little about the other one. Alison Bayliss is a very sensible girl."

"I wish they had never come to Birrendale!" said Mrs. Carruthers. "And you heard about the rival, Alec?"

"'Twas just a mistake!" said Alec.

"I'm sorry for that. I was hoping Mac was going to be rid of that Jessie Bayliss. It is not at all the match for him." Pause—rather a long one. "So there's no rival?"

"No, and she's in an awful way about him. May I see if Mac's awake?"

"You had far better leave him alone," said Mrs. Carruthers; but Alec went off without heeding the advice, and found Mac awake.

"Are you better?" asked Alec, looking down anxiously at his cousin.

"I suppose so," said Mac, with a restless movement; "there's nothing like not wanting to get well for making one recover."

"Then," said Alec, "if you're better, Mac, I'll tell you something."

And he drew the chair that Donaldson had left close up to the bedside.

"Yes," said Mac, looking at him with a singularly wretched expression.

"You're just a fool, Mac," began Alec.

"That's no news; I knew that long ago," returned the wounded hero of the brae-foot.

"Ay, but it's true! I've had fresh proof of it this very morning."

"You've met them again?" asked Mac, with despair in his face—the "them" being of course the couple he had seen at the theatre.

"I've seen Alison Bayliss; I've spoken to Alison Bayliss. I hate talking to girls, but I talked to her and did not hate it. She talks sense; that's more than her cousin does. We talked as we went along from St. Paul's to the Tower, and we came to the conclusion that you and Jessie were a couple of fools, and that we—that is, Alison Bayliss and I—were very sensible persons."

"She—Jessie's no fool!" exclaimed Mac bitterly. "She's thrown over a poor man for a rich man; you don't call that folly, do you?"

"Well, you see, that's what she hasn't done," said Alec with deliberate emphasis.

"Who's the man, then? He looked rich and prosperous," asked Mac, his pale face flushing crimson.

"The man is just a relative,"

"She hasn't one."

"There you're mistaken; she has."

"Humph!" said Mac incredulously, remembering the lover-like attitude with which Arthur Bayliss had bent toward Jessie.

"Alison Bayliss was indignant at the bare suspicion of a rival; and she's the most sensible girl I ever met. I asked her point blank. I said, 'Has Mac a rival?' and she said straight out, 'No.'"

"But I saw it with my own eyes!" said Mac; "if that man was a relative his manner was singularly unlike a relative's."

"I'd believe Alison Bayliss sooner than my own eyes," exclaimed Alec. "But then I'm a sane person, I'm not in love; you are, so you can't be expected to believe in Jessie."

"Go on!" said Mac; "what else did she say? Be quick, can't you?"

"Why, she said—and she was very angry when she said it—she said, Jessie fainted away dead in her arms. 'You can tell your cousin that, if you like,' she said; Jessie had been waiting for you ever since Wednesday, Mac, and it was on Saturday—yesterday—when this happened, that she fainted dead away."

"Fainted?" asked Mac, opening his eyes as widely as possible.

"Ay, fainted dead away," repeated Alec, and he paused and looked at Mac, who had closed his eyes and seemed for the moment hardly conscious, as if he too were going to faint.

"I say, old fellow!" said Alec, growing frightened, bending over his cousin as he spoke.

"All right," replied Mac, after a long-drawn breath. "You be off now, will you! Be off, sharp!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE MEETING OF THE MATRONS.

IN the humbler ranks of life, getting married is one of the simplest things possible, but idyllic simplicity is by no means attainable in the higher grades of society. Even such unimportant persons (from a social point of view) as Mac Carruthers and Jessie Bayliss were of necessity hampered by the opinions of many relatives.

Do not rashly suppose that because, owing to the fortunate intervention of Alec and Alison, Jessie and Mac now understood the steadfastness of each other's affection, all was to go smoothly ever after.

Very far from it. Mr. and Mrs. Carruthers, of Muirhead, had their opinions—Mrs. James Bayliss had hers, Arthur Bayliss had his, so too had John Harbuckle; and the views of all these relatives were destined to influence the fortunes of Mac and Jessie very materially.

Alison, during Jessie's absence, told her mother and uncle of her meeting with Alec Carruthers. The incident, besides giving rise to

an elaborate discussion, opened up the Birrendale connection in a manner almost too beautiful for Mrs. Bayliss to resist.

"I will take Jessie to call on Mrs. Carruthers the first thing to-morrow," observed Mrs. Bayliss, her mind full, not of Mac and Jessie, but of her own beloved Cauldknowe. "Oh, Arthur! How I wish you could have seen our Birrendale home as it was when dear James and I first went there! It was charming! An earthly paradise! James had such wonderfully good taste in everything! Why, I remember very well that Mrs. Carruthers, on the occasion of her first visit, was perfectly astonished to see what we had made of our drawing-room. Ah, you never saw James's portraits! He had scarcely begun to study art in your time. Arthur, the rate at which he improved was marvellous! But then he was such a genius! Well, I'm glad, on the whole, that Jessie will keep up the Birrendale connection (I really don't think we need feel any undue anxiety about poor dear Mac); I am glad she will marry a Carruthers. I couldn't help feeling when we came here, what a sad thing it was that we were giving up the county families; that was one reason why I rebelled against it so much; and, indeed, Arthur, I think (although I don't like to complain of John), but I do think it would have shown a much nicer spirit on his part if he had let us live on there. And you know, with our little pensions and all, it would have been but a trifling expense to him, and what a comfort to us!"

"These people—the young man's friends, they are on good terms with you, then?" asked Arthur Bayliss.

"Oh, perfectly—perfectly! Everyone of any standing in the whole of the Dale is. Of course, poor James's position in the Service was alone enough to ensure that! And I'm certain no set of people could have been kinder or more hospitable, nor have shown us more attention. Mac's uncle, the Laird of Muirhead, and I were always very great friends; indeed, I shall never forget the neat little speech he made when James showed him my portrait. Mrs. Carruthers was there, and between ourselves showed signs of jealousy. She did indeed!" Mrs. Bayliss, seldom a talkative woman, was yet occasionally visited by a great exposition of speech. On that dreary Sunday she talked and talked until Muirhead grew the size of Abbotsford, and Cauldknowe was as eligible a family residence as any, short of baronial rank, north of Carlisle.

Mrs. Bayliss, I take it, looked forward to her visit of the next morning with an interest as keen, if far less intense and pathetic, as did her pretty niece Jessie, when the poor child knew it had been arranged. As for Arthur Bayliss, the idea of his being mistaken for his daughter's lover distinctly pleased and amused him. The very first moment he was alone he walked straight up to the looking-glass and surveyed himself with a satisfaction to which he had long been a stranger; feeling—alas! for only too brief a time!—that the weight of ten heavy years had suddenly fallen from him.

It was not until after some hours that this opportunity occurred, but I am inclined to think that this wish to see himself was the very first sentiment he entertained on the subject. It tickled both his fancy and his vanity that he had been taken for Jessie's lover.

The thought brought that pleasant and recognisable light to his eyes that always made him show to the best advantage. Mrs. Bayliss was quite convinced that now dearest James was gone, Arthur was the handsomest man left on this earth, and she treated him accordingly.

"I suppose I ought not to raise an objection to Jessie's engagement," was Arthur Bayliss's first remark, after hearing Alison's narrative (for his speech and thought did not go together always), "of course I ought not to object; but I should have been glad if Jessie could have remained disengaged for a year or two. I have been separated from her so long that I can hardly help being selfish enough to wish for her undivided attention for a while. However," and he sighed, "that I forfeited, as I have forfeited so much besides. I must say, though, the Birrendale connection, as far as the young man is concerned, doesn't look promising. If it could be broken off without hurting my dear girl too much, I should be just as well pleased."

It was some such observation as this that had called forth Mrs. Bayliss's oration on the merits of the match and on the glories of Muirhead and Cauldknowe.

In spite, however, of this interesting topic, that grey dull Sunday was a very long one. Jessie came down presently, but she added nothing to the fast diminishing stock of brightness; for she scarcely said a word, and looked pale and wan.

Towards evening it became impossible for the little household in Trinity Square to disguise from themselves and from each other that it was indeed a long, long Sunday: longer than even the Scotch Sabbaths in Birrendale had ever been.

There was a feeling of being stranded, of being far above the tide of humanity that had ebbed out into the suburbs and had left the City and its few residents with little else to do than to wait for the returning tide.

On week-days, during working hours, the City is a great centre of gravity; but on Sunday the magnetic attraction lies beyond the Lord Mayor's jurisdiction. Go where you will, do what you may, if you remain in the City on a Sunday you are always conscious that you are at variance with some organic law to which your happier fellow-creatures are loyally submitting. You are, you feel, where you ought not to be, where no one else is, and are consequently as restless as a needle under a magnet; you cannot get to your magnet, you cannot get comfortable, you cannot feel right; you want to yield to the attraction and run away from the City, but circumstances won't allow it.

If you are alone, you think of Robinson Crusoe ; if your people are with you, you and they are the Swiss Family Robinson ; but in both cases you are on a desert island where you can only *pretend* to be at home.

Naturally you go to bed early, how early you would on Monday hardly like to admit, if, as was the case with the Baylisses on that particular grey Sunday, you do not rouse yourself to attend evening service.

Arthur Bayliss managed to stay at Trinity Square until half-past nine, but the last hour was very trying to everyone, they were all so sleepy and so utterly weary of the long day.

It was a relief to his family when they heard the heavy door close after him. He was very affectionate to Jessie before he left. Of course she went downstairs to let him out, and he made her promise that she would not worry herself, but would go to bed at once and sleep all night long.

She assured him that she would, and fulfilled her promise by staying awake hours at a time, and by getting up and kneeling by the bedside and praying that Mac might not die.

Poor Jessie ! A weight of care had fallen upon her, a fear as if that unspeakable horror—Mac's death—had come near her. It had passed by, she hoped, but she shuddered to think how near it had come. It was wonderful to her now how people lived on after those to whom they had given their hearts had gone. Her aunt, her father—they had loved and lost, but they could still live and take their parts with their fellow-creatures. She knew they had suffered much, yet they lived on, and sometimes even laughed and were merry ; but Jessie, as she listened to the clocks striking hour after hour, Jessie could not imagine herself alive after Mac had left this world. It was a thing impossible—an idea too awful even for thought.

"You're sure Alec will have written ?" she said to her cousin as soon as she awoke. "Will he address the letter to you, do you think ?"

"I should think so," returned Alison. "They'll have come by now. Shall I run down to the box ?"

"No," said Jessie, "I'll go. If it's to you, you won't mind my reading it ?"

"Certainly not ; but you're tired—let me go."

Jessie, however, would go herself. She slipped on her dressing-gown and stole down. It was early for the City (which is quite an hour later than the suburbs, having no trains to catch), the lower part of the house was still shut up. The letters were still in the box. She cautiously opened the little door and took them out. There were a great many. With trembling hands and a heart sick with fear and hope, she looked through them. "Messrs. J. Harbuckle & Co.," "John Harbuckle, Esq.," two or three to names unknown to her, "care of Messrs. J. Harbuckle & Co.," "Mrs. Bayliss," "Miss

Sarah Jane Smith" (the housemaid), more to John Harbuckle, Esq., more to Messrs. John Harbuckle & Co., one for Miss Alison Bayliss, but from a feminine correspondent. At last!

"Oh, it is! It's Mac's—it's Mac's very own! Oh, dear, dear, dear Mac! How good of you to write!" cried Jessie, and fortunately there was no one about to count how many kisses Jessie showered upon it, nor to see how eagerly she read it through and gave it more kisses and read it again.

It was unmistakably in Mac's hand, but was hardly, to quote John Harbuckle, "a fine example" of that hand. An hour afterwards, when what Jessie called her "jokesomeness" was making a shy little advance to come back to her once more, Jessie herself pronounced it "wobbly," which I take to be an adjective expressing shakiness.

It very nearly made Jessie cry when she first saw it. It looked ill did that note, poor thing! It was only a few lines literally, and not in the John Harbucklean sense, begging Mac's dearest Jessie not to be frightened, as now the pain in his heart was gone, no doubt the pain in his head would follow immediately. He had suffered physically a good deal, he said, but nothing in comparison to the tortures that ought to have been his for having caused suffering to the sweetest girl in the world. All he required to make him quite well was to be assured by her own—several affectionate terms came in here—by her own lips that she had forgiven him. Meanwhile he was her most loving and penitent Mac.

"P.S. and N.B.—There is really no cause for anxiety about me now. Yesterday morning it was different."

Jessie flew upstairs with the softest, rosiest light on her cheeks, and threw her arms round Alison, who was doing her hair at the glass.

"I'll go out prowling with you as much as you like, Alie. If you hadn't gone out prowling, all this wouldn't have happened," she exclaimed.

"Then you're sorry you beat me yesterday—are you? Come, say you're sorry!" laughed Alison, kissing the top of Jessie's head.

"I'm sorry!" cried Jessie. "No, I'm not! I'm glad, ever so glad! I never was half so glad before!—and you're a good old thing, that you are! Do marry Alec; I should be so happy if you'd only marry Alec! All I want to make me perfectly happy is that you should marry that good, dear Alec! He deserves you for being such a darling as to come wandering down here. Alison, say you'll marry Mac's cousin?"

"Rubbish—rubbish! Who's to take care of Uncle John? Come, come, this won't do! Remember we're cookless."

"Will Aunt Mary really go to see Mrs. Carruthers?" asked Jessie.

"Go? Of course she will! She's longing for a gossip about Birrendale."

"Somehow I rather wish she weren't going," sighed Jessie, attacking her own plaits. "You know we have neither seen Mrs. Carruthers nor heard from her since Mac and I have been engaged. That will make it rather awkward, won't it? I'm always so frightened of these elderly people, they're so awe-inspiring."

"The Muirhead people always used to be very kind to us. Don't you remember the piece of salmon that so fortunately saved us from the ever-recurring haddie on the occasion of Uncle John's visit?"

"Ah, but that was Mac, you know. I whiles ha' me doots about Mistress Muirhead! Perhaps I'd better not go; perhaps I'd better let Aunt Mary arrange matters first."

"Perhaps you'd better do no such thing," said Alison with decision. "And perhaps you'd better make haste, because there'll be a good deal to do in the house before you go out to-day, Miss Jessie."

Now Jessie had been given to understand that Mrs. Bayliss would call on Mrs. Carruthers in the morning, and by the morning she understood the forenoon, that is, before twelve o'clock; but whatever might have been her aunt's original intention, as a matter of fact it was three in the afternoon before Mrs. Bayliss and Miss Jessie Bayliss were announced to Mrs. Carruthers.

Mrs. Carruthers was writing letters at a well-worn Davenport in the hired drawing-room in Craven Street. She put down her pen at once and received her visitors with a nicely-balanced smile, expressive, she hoped, of due courtesy but no welcome.

Mrs. Bayliss, as she came up the stairs, which were but shabbily carpeted, had also been trying to assume a nicely-balanced smile, by which she wished to express a certain affectionate sympathy, blended with a certain pleasure at again meeting a representative Birrendale woman. She did not succeed very well. There was a degree of tentativeness about her expression and manner when she appeared; and as for Jessie, she looked rather dazed and over-conscious that she was in the presence of Mac's aunt.

They all, however, shook hands in an unnoticeable way, and then Mrs. Carruthers, with a little movement of her hand, invited Mrs. Bayliss and Jessie to places on the sofa, while she herself resumed her seat at the Davenport where she sat quite uprightly.

"And how is poor Mac? We were so distressed to hear of his sad accident," asked Mrs. Bayliss.

"Malcolm will be getting better. He just needs rest and freedom from excitement and he'll be well again," said Mrs. Carruthers, taking up her knitting, a thick-ribbed stocking, destined to accompany her husband's shooting suit. Her hands were never idle a moment.

"It might have been a most serious affair," said Mrs. Bayliss.

"It might have been," echoed Mrs. Carruthers, knitting away with amazing celerity and looking down at her work, although that was quite unnecessary, as she could have done it as well had she been blindfolded.

"Does she know that Mac and I are engaged?" thought Jessie, who was sitting on the corner of the sofa, feeling exceedingly uncomfortable. "She must know; but her manner is quite different from what it used to be."

"And how is everybody?" asked Mrs. Bayliss with a touch of gush in her voice and manner, making a desperate attempt to begin conversation.

"In Birrendale will you mean?" asked Mrs. Carruthers politely.

"Yes," returned Mrs. Bayliss, uneasily conscious of the want of reciprocity, "in dear Birrendale."

"Everybody is much as when you left," said Mrs. Carruthers, turning her work as she began to use another needle.

"Our old friends, the Johnstones?" asked Mrs. Bayliss, resolving not to be beaten without showing fight. Jessie cast an anxious glance at her aunt, and perceived her colour rising; for herself she wanted very much to run away, only she wanted still more to hear about Mac.

"Poor Mac! (It's wicked of me to call him Mac, I suppose she'd say.) If he only knew I was here! It's too bad! and I must see him!" she felt.

"Our old friends, the Johnstones?" asked Mrs. Bayliss.

"They returned early in June," replied Mrs. Carruthers.

"They are away a great deal."

"Far too much."

Then there was a dead pause.

"Our tenants at Cauldknowe? They seemed rather nice people," Mrs. Bayliss recommenced.

"So I have heard. I've not met them yet."

"And Mr. Baird?"

"He is about as usual."

"Maggie Baird has been ill?"

"She is still far from well, very far from well."

"Her chest is delicate," said Mrs. Bayliss.

"We fear it is," said Mrs. Carruthers.

"Do they give her cod liver oil?"

"Oh, yes, by the gallon."

Then there was another long pause. To proceed with conversation seemed impossible. Jessie furtively put out her hand and touched the crape on Mrs. Bayliss's mantle, meaning, "Pray let us go."

Mrs. Bayliss understood the mute appeal of the little action perfectly, but she did not choose to go yet. What did Mrs. Carruthers mean by ignoring the widow of so distinguished an officer (in his widow's opinion) as Captain James Bayliss?

The fact was Mrs. Carruthers did not at all wish to ignore Mrs. Bayliss, she only wished to ignore the engagement between Jessie and Mac, and in all probability had Mrs. Bayliss not spoken of Malcolm

Carruthers as simple Mac, and in so doing assumed a sort of right to that young man, the behaviour of Mrs. Carruthers would have been less frigid.

"You think that your nephew is better, then?" presently resumed Mrs. Bayliss.

"Yes; he was able to get up this forenoon."

"That looks well. Then we need not feel any more anxiety for him."

"That would be quite uncalled for," said Mrs. Carruthers, and her tone so plainly said, "Pray, what right have you to be anxious about my nephew at all?" that Jessie had hard work to keep back the question that rose indignantly to her lips:

"Do you, or do you not, know that Mac and I are engaged?"

Mrs. Carruthers knew perfectly well what was passing in Jessie's mind. She was conscious that she was giving her pain, and being naturally a kind-hearted woman, she was sorry for her. But she felt she had a duty to perform, not only to Mac—who was only her nephew—but towards the much more important Alec, who on Sunday, for the first time in his life, had spoken of a girl, Alison Bayliss to wit, with something like interest.

"I've nothing to say against either of the girls," said Mrs. Carruthers to herself, "only it's a sort of thing that just won't do."

If, therefore, Mrs. Carruthers seems to you rather heartless, you must remember that she had two young men of her own to protect from the wiles of a penniless widow and two penniless girls; if, in so doing, she had to hurt one of those girls, she was sorry; still duty is duty, and has to be done. Her brief sentences, as they here stand, perhaps hardly do her justice. She did not speak them harshly; far from it; she spoke in her ordinary gentle sing-song, and accompanied them with her nicely-balanced smile; nevertheless those little sentences erected an impassable barrier between her and her visitors.

Jessie's hand was again furtively touching her aunt's crape, with a mute appeal for release from the torture, for truly it was little else to her, and Mrs. Bayliss was on the point of rising, when the door was opened, and in came no less a person than Mac himself, with a red bandanna bound round his forehead to hide the bandages.

Jessie gazed at him with wide-open eyes, as if he were a ghost.

He went straight to her, took both her hands in his, and kissed her as fervently as if no eyes but his and hers had seen him do it.

"Jessie!" he exclaimed, with every bit of his heart.

"Mac! You are better, Mac?" and she looked up in his face with such sweet anxiousness that he felt it was well worth while to have met with that all but fatal accident.

"First tell me you forgive me," whispered Mac, inserting himself between Mrs. Bayliss and Jessie on the sofa, but with his face close to Jessie's all the time; "you forgive me?"

"Yes, dear," whispered Jessie, too much frightened and pleased and altogether beside herself to think of the others.

"Then I'm right again," said Mac. "Mrs. Bayliss, have you taken the trouble to come up to inquire after me?—that's really very good of you."

"Mac, have you gone mad?" asked Mrs. Carruthers, before Mrs. Bayliss could reply; "you know the doctor said you needed quiet."

"Ay," said Mac, quite unabashed, "but I needed a sight of my Jessie far more."

Then, to make matters worse, Alec must come in and seem quite delighted at finding Mrs. Bayliss and Jessie there.

Mrs. Carruthers resolved to return to Muirhead without delay.

Of course Mac and Jessie had a great many things to explain to one another, but there was no chance for them that day, for there sat the two matrons, each smiling a dangerous smile, and each apparently as ignorant of the feelings of an engaged couple as if neither of them had ever been young in all her life.

But Mac was equal to them; wounded and suffering as he was, he was equal to them; in a minute or two he had recovered from the first excitement of seeing Jessie, and had plunged into an amusing recital of what, in reality, was a most disastrous affair. He and Alec had hardly been five minutes in the room before three of the little company were laughing quite merrily.

Mrs. Carruthers smiled and smiled, and went on with her knitting.

(To be continued.)



THE RUSTLE OF THE LEAVES.

HEAR the rustle and the shiver of the leaves
As their branches lash the swiftly-rushing air!
Do they take the winds, O, think you, for great steeds
That will bear them anywhere?
Are they grieving, can you tell me, when the winds
Just go rushing on and leave them fastened there?

Hear the rustle of the faintly-stirring leaves
As the soft breeze lifts their edges, one by one!
Could anything be sweeter, do you think,
Than this gentle little run
Up and down the long, true keyboard of the trees,
When the soft breeze plays its sweetest for the sun?

Hear the rustle of the tired autumn leaves
That have wrought and done their best the summer through!
Are they sorry, can you say, because the end
Is very nearly due?
Are they quite content, I wonder, with their lives,
With their purpose, to which all of them were true?

Oh, the rustle, oh, the rustle of the leaves
That everywhere and ever speak their word!
If our souls would only listen, do you think
Their message could be heard?
Is there any sense so fine as to discern
What they try to tell us when *their* souls are stirred?

JUNIATA STAFFORD.



NELSON'S BIRTHPLACE.

NORFOLK ranks peculiarly high in having given birth to naval commanders whose services have been displayed at critical periods in the history of England. Sir John Narford, Sir Christopher Myngs, Sir Cloudesley Shovel, Lord Hawke, and other distinguished admirals, were all Norfolk men, and the most famous of them all, he whom Tennyson calls "the greatest sailor since the world began," Horatio Lord Nelson, was born at Burnham Thorpe, in that county, September 29th, 1758.

When we think of a Norfolk village, we picture it lying among wide, marshy plains which have been reclaimed from the sea, with never a hedge, and never a tree, except the melancholy-looking pollard willows which line the ditches. But as we set out to walk to Burnham Thorpe from the nearest railway-station (Burnham Market), it seems as if we had left Norfolk far behind us, and had been transported, as by a magician's wand, into one of the Midland counties; for although the road is level, as a rule, the country has become undulating, almost hilly, and we walk between luxuriant hedgerows gay with wild flowers and shaded by wayside trees. The tower of the church of which Nelson's father was rector is soon the most conspicuous object in the landscape.

The church stands on the outskirts of the village on a grassy hillock in the midst of green fields. The only habitation near it is an old manor house, with high, sloping roof and dormer windows, which most people mistake for the rectory. The ancient moat by which it was formerly surrounded is now a weedy pond fringed with bulrushes, where waterfowl disport themselves in the sunshine. The whole scene is indescribably calm and peaceful on this still autumn afternoon.

What a quiet home was this from which Nelson went forth to his life of toil and hardship, of weary waiting on wind and weather, and fierce hand-to-hand conflicts with his country's foes!

On a nearer approach to the church, it is somewhat disenchanting to find that the fabric, as it existed in Nelson's time, has disappeared, and that the building has undergone a complete restoration, which, although it has been carried out most successfully, and leaves nothing to be desired from an architectural point of view, is altogether new and fresh, without memories or associations. It is some consolation, however, to know that it is now more like the church of Nelson's boyhood than it became in after years, when some unsightly and tasteless alterations were introduced by Nelson's father after he had gone to sea.

But there is nothing here now to remind us of Nelson except the graves of his family in the chancel, the old font in which he was baptized, and the ancient tower from which the bells often rang out joyous peals to celebrate his victories. The interior of the church is fresh from the hands of the workmen. We cannot but admire its stately grace and fair proportions, but the white walls look bare and cold, and the garish day comes in through the new windows.

Nelson's father and mother are buried under flat stones in the chancel. A singular interest is always attached to the mother of a great man; but very little is known of Mrs. Nelson's history. She died at a comparatively early age, probably worn out by the cares and anxieties of a large family. The Latin inscription tells us that she was a daughter of Maurice Suckling, D.D. (a Prebendary of Westminster), and grand-daughter of Sir Charles Turner, Bart., and his first wife, Mary, daughter of Sir Robert Walpole, of Houghton; that she had had eleven children, of whom eight survived; that she was an affectionate wife and mother, a sincere Christian, and a true friend, and that she died December 26th in the year of salvation 1767, aged forty-two years.

The future hero was only nine years old when his mother died. He was a weak and delicate child, subject to continual attacks of ague, and he must have sorely missed her watchful care and affection.

One of his biographers tells us that he was a great favourite with his mother—a woman of great fortitude and firmness, who could thoroughly appreciate these qualities in her son. There is a story told that, in a childish mock battle with his brother William, some friends who happened to be present, begged her to interfere in favour of the younger, who seemed to be getting the worst of it, but she replied with the utmost composure: "Let them alone, little Horace will beat him; let Horace alone."

It is interesting to know that there was a great naval commander in his mother's family—Galfridus or Geoffrey Walpole, who commanded the *Lion*, of sixty guns, in a gallant action in the Mediterranean in 1711, whose sword came to Horatio from his uncle Captain Suckling.

Nelson's marked affection for his native village was, doubtless, due to his love for his mother. He never could speak of his early years without emotion. Writing in May, 1804, to a friend of his father, Dr. Allot, Dean of Raphoe, he says: "Most probably I shall never see dear dear Burnham again; but I have a satisfaction in thinking that my bones will repose in the village which gave me birth. The thought of former days brings all my mother into my heart, which shows itself in my eyes."

Underneath the Latin inscription are the words in English, "Let these alone, let no man move these bones," reminding us of Shakespeare's epitaph without the accompanying malediction. They were

probably added by the Rev. Edmund Nelson in 1791, when the Church was closed for repairs, and delivered into the hands of the Philistines!

The grave of Nelson's father is beside that of his wife. On the wall close by is a marble tablet to his memory surmounted by an urn bearing the Nelson coat of arms with the very appropriate motto, "*Palnam qui meruit ferat.*" Though his constitution was so weak and delicate that he was obliged to leave his chilly Norfolk home very frequently for the milder climate of Bath, he survived his wife thirty-five years, and lived long enough to hear of all his brave son's victories save one—he was mercifully spared the fatal news of Trafalgar!

It was from his father that Nelson derived that strong sense of duty which continued with him all through life, and was the key to his successful career.

"Not once or twice in our rough island-story,
The path of duty was the way to glory."

The old clergyman's letters to his son, though written in the stilted grandiloquent style of that period, reveal his high character, and are full of wise fatherly counsel. In a letter written from Bath in February, 1797, after the battle of St. Vincent, when Nelson was made a Rear-Admiral of the Blue, we get a vivid glimpse of the pride and joy which thrilled the old man's heart when the tidings of his son's victories reached England.

"MY DEAR REAR-ADMIRAL,—I thank my God with all the power of a grateful soul for the mercies he has most graciously bestowed on me, in preserving you amidst the imminent perils which so lately threatened your life. Not only my few acquaintances here, but the people in general, meet me at every corner with such handsome words that I am obliged to retire from the public eye. A wise moralist has observed that even bliss can rise but to a certain pitch, and this has been verified in me. The height of glory to which your professional judgment, united with a proper degree of bravery guarded by Providence, has raised you, few sons, my dear child, attain to, and fewer fathers live to see. Tears of joy have involuntarily trickled down my cheeks. Who can stand the force of such general congratulations?"

We notice a small tablet to the memory of one of Nelson's brothers, Edmund, who lived and died in his native village as his father's curate. How different the lives of the two brothers, and what a contrast between Nelson's resting-place, "the marble tomb with trophies, rhymes, and scutcheons of renown," and that of the playmate of his childhood, whose lot it was

"Among familiar names to rest,
And in the places of his youth."

In the churchyard may be seen the tomb of Nelson's sister, Mrs. Bolton, from whom the present Lord Nelson is descended.

The baptism of Nelson is thus recorded in the Parish Register, 1758, in his father's handwriting: "Horatio, son of Edmund and Catherine Nelson, born Sept. 29th, baptized Oct. 5th privately, publicly Nov. 15th." The private baptism points to his having been a delicate child. There is a marginal note by Nelson's brother, the Rev. William Nelson, afterwards First Lord Nelson: "Invested with the ensigns of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath at St James's, September 27th, 1797," and underneath in different writing (probably that of his brother-in-law, Mr. Bolton), "Rear-Admiral of the Blue, 1797, created Lord Nelson of the Nile and Burnham Thorpe, October 6th, 1798. *Cætera enarret fama!*"

The Register also contains Nelson's signature as a witness at two marriages which took place in the parish church in 1769, when he was about ten or eleven years of age. He had to accompany his father in his walk from the rectory to the church, probably open the church door and get things ready for him. Poor couples then often came to the church by themselves (no witnesses), and the Rector, Nelson's father, would request the sexton's wife, and, if necessary, his son also, to sign as witnesses.

This is explained by the fact that Ann Scott has placed "her mark" above the name of the great Viscount Nelson. The first signature was originally written Horace, but his father afterwards altered it to Horatio. Local tradition says that he boxed the boy's ears for not signing his baptismal name, and there is evidence that his father took a serious view of the error, for the second register signed by him a few months afterwards is very well and carefully written. It is the earliest autograph of Nelson as Horatio Nelson which is known to exist.

He was called Horatio after the second Lord Walpole; but that Horace was the name by which he was best known among his relatives is a fact not noticed by his biographers. His father's last letter to him, February 26th, 1805, began "Dear Horace."

The rectory is almost two miles from the church. It is a large, handsome house, standing in an extensive lawn, studded with fine trees.

The village preacher's modest mansion, where Nelson spent his youth, was pulled down many years ago.

It was probably situated near the road, and nothing remains to mark the spot but two immemorial elms, and an ancient pump, which still supplies water to the rectory. We wonder if Nelson ever set this pump going that he might launch paper boats in the water, a favourite pastime of his when he was at school at Downham.

Nelson left Burnham when he was only twelve years old, and did not see his home again for sixteen years, when he returned accompanied by his wife, and spent five quiet years at the Rectory with

his aged and infirm father, and this at a time when, conscious of his own genius, he might have been winning laurels elsewhere.

This was a moral victory transcending even that of the Nile and Trafalgar, for which he has not received due credit.

During his residence there, Nelson turned his attention to the farm and garden, digging with his own hands for exercise, but not neglecting the current periodicals of the time, studying charts and drawing plans. His sympathy was roused by the hard lot of the agricultural labourers in his own county, and he endeavoured in many ways to ameliorate their condition.

Nelson's love of Norfolk was remarkable. It was well known that if any of his ship's crew came from Norfolk they were always regarded with especial favour by him. Very early in his career, at the period of his North Sea voyage, he wrote thus to his friend Captain Locker: "To a youngster in the ship, whose friends are Norfolk people who had not made an allowance for their son, I took upon me to allow £20 a year."

The crew of the *Agamemnon* chosen by Nelson himself, was mainly composed of Norfolk men, who thus felt a pride in raising their appellation of "men of Norfolk" to reputation and distinction, which accounted for its success and activity.

After the battle of St. Vincent, Nelson presented the sword which he took from the Spanish Commander to the chief town of his native county. His letter to the Mayor of Norwich concludes with these words: "And being born in the County of Norfolk, I beg leave to present this sword to the City of Norwich in order that it may be preserved as a memento of this event, and of my affection for my native county."

When at sea Nelson sent large sums of money for the relief of the poor of Burnham Thorpe. This attachment to the home of his boyhood continued to the last day of the great hero's life. We are told that on the morning of the Battle of Trafalgar when the *Victory* was going into action, Nelson said: "This is the happiest day of my life, and it is a happy day, too, for Burnham Thorpe, for it is the day of their fair!" And as he lay dying in the cockpit of the *Victory* his words were: "Don't throw me overboard; I wish to be buried with my father and mother, unless it should please the King to order otherwise."

It did please the King to order otherwise, and the great sailor whose life had begun in a quiet country parsonage was borne with pomp and pageantry, solemn music and military array to his last resting-place under the dome of St. Paul's.

"There in streaming London's central roar,
Let the sound of those he wrought for
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore."

J. A. L.

VANISHED.

BY INA GARVEY.

I.

WE were but cousins in blood, Walter Ross and I, cousins on the mothers' side, so that we had not even the same name, yet were we brothers in spirit. Both orphans, both without nearer relatives than each other, both gently born, yet left in early manhood entirely dependent on our own exertions for a livelihood—these were the similarities in our fate that helped to draw us yet closer together. And there was still another similarity. Both followers of art—literature in my case, in his the painter's craft—our circumstances forbade that we should, save in surreptitious moments, follow the higher but more precarious walks of those arts, and condemned us to the humble, mechanical drudgery that brings in a certain, if small, return.

I, with full-grown novels weaving in my head, and short stories getting written in my few leisure hours, had to slave away for my living as a journalist and reporter. And he, with considerable talent both as critic and performer, and with all his ambition pointing towards "subject pictures," depended for his indispensable daily bread on his employment by a West End firm of art dealers, as copyist, restorer, and general art expert, adviser, and factotum. Through this firm, also, he had occasional orders for cheap crayon portraits.

Working hard at our mechanical employments, and finding what vent we could for our more ambitious yearnings, we both managed to make a fairly good living. For me, the drudgery of reporting, of "making an inset," and hunting down news items to form "pars," was occasionally glorified by seeing my name to a short story in one of the magazines. For him, there had shone upon his routine work for Messrs. L'Estrange, of Pall Mall, the blaze of joy and pride consequent on once getting accepted and hung at Burlington House. It was a head of himself that gained this longed-for distinction, well painted, and an excellent likeness. It naturally did not sell, being a portrait, and when he fetched it away at the closing of the exhibition, Walter formally made me a present of it.

Poor fellow! It hangs in the room where I am writing now, and every time I look up I meet its quiet, friendly eye.

The "diggings" we shared in those days were in Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square. The best room—a large one with a north light—was Walter's studio. Here were his easels, his canvases, the "throne"

on which his model posed when he could indulge in painting merely for his own delight. Here, too—for it was our only living-room—standing in an unobtrusive corner, was my writing-table, on which, in my few spare hours, I wrote short stories, and in whose drawer lay the opening chapters of a “new,” up-to-date novel, with a daring, outspoken, discontented heroine, and brand-new startling social views complete.

“I begin to get a bit sick of my work,” said Walter one evening, as we sat smoking. “I want to spend my time trying to climb, instead of going round and round on L’Estrange’s treadmill—attending sales for them, and picking up bargains; being sent to country mansions to ‘restore’ old Vandycks and Titians, or make copies of them; doing heads in black and white, at five guineas each, of old buffers with faces to break an artist’s heart. If only I could chuck drudgery, and give up my time to original work. But, of course, that’s out of the question.”

Walter had been set on to make this moan by having that day been commissioned by Messrs. L’Estrange to go down to Partington Hall, in Kent, the seat of Sir John Partington, to make a copy of a certain Vandyck (Sir John having given his permission), for one of their patrons. My cousin was a very expert copyist, and was well paid for this kind of work. Partington Hall was but fifteen miles from town, and he was to go and return each day.

He had been at work on this new commission about a week when we next sat smoking and chatting, and I expected to hear more moans over the distastefulness of his employment. His thoughts, however, had been turned into another channel.

Sir John Partington, it seemed, had a small but very valuable collection of paintings, the gems of the collection being the Vandyck on which Walter was engaged (a head of the ill-starred Earl of Strafford), and an exquisite Romney, in raving of which he forgot for the time his repinings and his aspirations. The subject was the lovely and notorious Lady Hamilton, habited, according to the artificial mode of those days when sitting for portraits, *en bergère*, with crook and distant flock of sheep complete.

“It’s the finest Romney in existence!” cried Walter enthusiastically, “and far the most beautiful portrait of the fair Hamilton. I swear I’m getting quite infatuated even with her counterfeit presentment, having sat in the room all day with it for a week (the most valuable of the pictures are in a small room opening from the chief gallery). No wonder that in the flesh she made such havoc, could twist men round her finger, dupe them, make her market of them, drive them to frenzy—lovely, alluring, heartless witch! She was Nelson’s last thought, in all the glory and the agony of his tragic, triumphant death-scene; and, as I gaze at that exquisite face, with the devil of coquetry lurking in every angel curve and dimple, I cannot wonder that it was so. Oh, miracle of genius!” broke off

Walter rhapsodically. "The woman grew old, and has been dust near a century, and yet, by the magic of Romney's brush, evading time and death, she still looks on us, dazzling in her everlasting youth, and through long ages will stir men's pulses with wild thoughts of all that they would do and dare for such a face."

"Well, old fellow," said I, "of all your many smites, this is the queerest. Fallen in love with a picture, eh?"

"If there is such a process, yes," was his answer.

There was silence for a few moments, and then he said in a lighter tone, "Sir John himself came in to-day while I was at work—a thin, white-haired, polite old chap. Complimented me on the faithfulness of my copy; said his friend, Mr. Foster (that's the party he's allowing it to be copied for), will have quite as good an Old Master as his (Sir John's), barring the lapse of two or three centuries, and the name of Vandyck. He's just going abroad, so I shan't see him any more."

"What does his family consist of?" I asked.

"Only himself. He's a widower without children. A widowed sister and her daughter stay with him a good deal, I believe. The heir is a distant cousin, and, between ourselves, he's not heir to much. The estate's heavily encumbered, it's said, and Sir John decidedly stony."

"But he needn't be stony," I urged, "with such pictures as those. Perhaps they're entailed, though, and he can't sell them."

"Funny you should mention that," said Walter. "He happened to touch upon that very point to-day while he was talking to me. 'I believe that is considered the finest Romney extant,' he said, 'and the loveliest of all his Lady Hamiltons. Many a handsome offer have I had for that, if I would have parted with it—for all the pictures in this room—the Vandyck, the Romney, the Cuyp, the Claudes, and the Murillo, are my absolute property, not in the entail. But I love my pictures; I'm proud of them, and I'd do without a good many things before I sold them. They will be scattered and sold at my death, but, while I live, it is my pleasure and pride to keep them together.' Thus Sir John," concluded Walter. "I don't wonder he has refused all offers for that exquisite Romney. If it were mine, I wouldn't take a mountain of gold in exchange."

"Did the artist and art-critic speak there," I laughed, "or the posthumous adorer of that fair piece of mischief, Emma Hamilton?"

Soon after this conversation, I was sent abroad by a newspaper to which I was attached, and remained abroad two or three weeks. I only received one brief letter from Walter during that time. Consequently, the first I knew of the robbery from Partington Hall was when I was crossing from Calais to Dover on my return, and happened upon this paragraph in a London daily:

"THE MISSING ROMNEY."

"No arrest has yet been made in connection with the theft, reported some days ago, of Sir John Partington's very valuable Romney, Lady Hamilton as a shepherdess—the gem of the collection at Partington Hall."

"Why, that's the very picture Walter's been raving about," said I to myself.

I reached our lodgings in Charlotte Street, and went into the large room—Walter's studio, and our joint sitting-room. He was there, standing before his easel, and, with the help of an arrangement of mirrors, at work on a life-size portrait of himself.

"Hallo; old chap! You've got back!"

"Hallo, old fellow, here I am!"

Thus, and simultaneously, did we greet each other, and then, putting down my hat and valise, I threw myself into a chair.

"Rather a large order that, Walter. A life-size full length of yourself this time, eh?"

"Yes; I felt like having another try at myself. It's hasty work. I've only been at it a few days. But I flatter myself it's characteristic, and a good likeness."

"M—yes," said I, with true critical hesitation, as I put my head on one side to look at the picture. "It's like you, but there's a defiant, almost a menacing look, which gives the paint-brush in the right hand"—(for Walter had depicted himself at work before his easel)—"more the appearance of a weapon of offence than a peaceful implement of art."

Walter laughed. "Oh, one's reflection in the glass generally has that kind of look to oneself." And he went on working with large, forceful strokes of the brush.

"So Sir John Partington has been robbed of that fine Romney you raved about so much," I said.

"Yes; the fair Hamilton has been mysteriously cut from her frame and abducted. Sir John returned from abroad in a hurry, quite mad about it, I hear."

"Are you still going there?"

"Oh, no; I finished my job there last week."

"Rather unpleasant for you, old chap, that this robbery should have taken place."

"Well—yes—perhaps—rather." As Walter spoke, he was stepping back to note the effect of his last few strokes. "But"—with a laugh—"more unpleasant for old Sir John."

"There doesn't seem to be any clue to the thief?"

"I've not heard of any."

There was a short pause.

"You seem to have more leisure, Walter, for original work than usual. Have you no job from L'Estranges' just now?"

"I've severed my connection with L'Estranges'," was my cousin's very unexpected answer, as he stepped back once more to criticise his work.

"Severed your connection with L'Estranges'?" I exclaimed in amazement. "My dear fellow, why?"

"I considered their attitude towards me with regard to this missing picture decidedly offensive. Their regret that the picture should have vanished at the time when I, their accredited agent, was employed at Partington Hall, was expressed so often and in such a manner that I declined to work for them any longer. So, behold me, free and untrammelled! Come, Fred, don't look so solemn about it. I've saved enough to keep me afloat till my own original work begins to meet with proper appreciation. It will be the making of me, I daresay, to be able to give my time to climbing, instead of to L'Estranges' treadmill."

Some days after this, having an afternoon that I could call my own, I was devoting it to fiction, seated at my writing-table in its unobtrusive corner of the studio. Walter was busily at work, with a model sitting to him—an Italian organ-boy, with cavernous, dark eyes, and a thin, striking face, that had, to borrow my cousin's phrase, "any amount of drawing in it."

This boy, wrapped in a property-clock, with his intent, earnest gaze (which, however, overpassing his instructions, threatened at times to become a look of sheer agony) fixed upward on a particular part of the cornice, was destined, if Fate were kind, to figure in some future exhibition catalogue as "The Young Rienzi first meditating the Regeneration of Rome."

We had been working steadily and in silence for some time, when a loud knock at the hall-door was followed by footsteps on the stairs, and our landlady, opening the door of the studio, announced, in something of a flutter:

"Please, Mr. Ross, here's Sir John Partington and another gentleman to see you."

Partly shut off from the rest of the room by a folding-screen, I could yet note tolerably well the scene that ensued.

Telling his model to "rest," and laying down his palette and brushes, Walter turned to receive the visitors.

"How do you do, Mr. Ross? You were good enough to say, when we spoke together at Partington, that you would be glad to show me your work when I might be in your neighbourhood; so, happening to be in the neighbourhood to-day, I took the liberty of coming and bringing a friend."

Thus spoke Sir John, "a thin, polite, white-haired old chap," as Walter had described him.

My cousin replied suitably, and, with a politely expressed wish that

his work were better worth Sir John's inspection, proceeded to show what paintings and drawings he had on hand. The old baronet and his friend were intelligent and appreciative critics, and took particular interest in the painting then in progress—"The Young Rienzi."

They had looked at all the paintings and portfolios of drawings, and with apologies for having detained the artist from his model, were thinking of taking leave, when Sir John said:

"There is a painting over yonder, modestly banished to an obscure corner and leaning against the wall, that I should like to see better. A portrait of yourself, Mr. Ross, if I mistake not?"

Explaining that he had not thought the subject of sufficient interest to make the painting worth showing, Walter lifted the large canvas and placed it on an easel.

"Very good indeed!" said the old baronet, looking at it through his glasses. "Very spirited and vigorous; but certainly not flattered. Almost spiteful, in the evident determination not to flatter. And a little pugnacious, both in expression and attitude. Well, Mr. Ross, I must compliment you on your work, and thank you for the privilege of inspecting it. And now we will not hinder you any longer, and must go about our business—business concerning my terrible loss."

"A sad loss indeed," said Walter. "Have you any clue?"

Sir John shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know whether Scotland Yard has. I haven't."

An hour later the Young Rienzi had ceased meditating the Regeneration of Rome, had replaced the property-cloak with a threadbare jacket, and had returned to his normal state and his organ. I had put away my writing and had emerged from behind the screen. Walter had laid down his brushes, and we were refreshing ourselves with tea.

"Sir John seems a decent sort of old chap," said I. "What did he call his friend? Kitson?"

"Yes; some such name. I wonder," mused Walter, "what kind of report Kitson will make on his visit?"

"What kind of report? How d'you mean?"

"Oh, I only mean that I'll bet my life Kitson is a Scotland Yard detective, and was brought here by the old fellow to sniff about for the missing Romney."

"You're joking."

"That I'm not. It's as well you should know, Fred, that I'm suspected in connection with the affair, for I think it's quite on the cards that I shall be shadowed, and you'll get your share of it too, no doubt."

I stared at him in amazement.

"Are you serious? Do you really mean that Sir John Partington suspects you, and had the insolence to come here on that account and bring a detective?"

"I certainly mean it." Walter, his tea done, had risen and gone to look at his afternoon's work again. "But what then?" he added. "When they find that their prying and shadowing lead to nothing, they'll give up, and leave us in peace again."

Events proved Walter quite right in his prognostications.

Monstrous as it seemed, there could be no doubt that from that afternoon (and before it, too, of course, but my attention had not been directed to the matter earlier) he was certainly shadowed, and I also in a lesser degree.

He took it too calmly, I thought. For myself, I was almost in a fever of indignation.

But my feelings were soon turned into a darker, sadder channel. Years have done their healing work, yet I dread to dwell on the grief that now darkens on my page. Let me be as brief as possible.

It was a miserable, inclement summer, and Walter, sketching out of doors, got wet to the skin on more than one occasion. The result was rheumatic fever. He weathered the illness itself, and came through it to the convalescent stage, but it had left its fatal legacy behind.

One September day I had helped him to the cushioned chair by the window and left him amusing himself with his sketch-book, when I went to my work.

I returned some hours later to learn that he had died almost instantaneously of spasm of the heart, and to try to realise that I was utterly alone in the world.

II.

FIVE years had gone since Walter's death.

I had long ago left the rooms we had shared in Charlotte Street. My home was now a pretty cottage-villa at Norwood. From this you will surmise two things: that I had improved my position in the world and that I had taken a wife. Both surmises are correct. I was now Reader, or, as the more pretentious, up-to-date phrase goes, literary adviser, to Messrs. Preston, of Waterloo Place, and editor of 'Preston's Magazine'; also I had been for nearly three years husband of the best and dearest girl in the world.

It was in the year following Walter's death, and I was still feeling my loneliness sadly, when I first met Clara Croft at a Scotch hydro, where I was spending a summer week or two. She was there in the capacity of companion to a rich, vulgar widow, shaky as to her h's, and not firm on her feet in English grammar.

The charm that belongs to youth and beauty Clara Croft shared with one or two other fair ones at the hydro. But she had an added attraction—a charm of manner, a brightness, an ease, a graceful self-possession, that was all her own.

Mrs. Rawlinson, the widow, was proud of the companion whom she had engaged to polish her up in social matters, and soon took occasion to inform an acquaintance at the hydro that "Miss Croft was a gentlewoman born, niece of a baronet, and on the mother's side coming of one of the oldest families in England; accustomed, too, to mix with smart society, as you can see."

She was a kind-hearted, pleasant woman, this Mrs. Rawlinson. She saw that I was greatly attracted by her sweet companion, and did not hinder my suit, save by saying to me once, in her free, jocular way:

"Ah, young man, you may be a clever writer, and good-looking, and a gentleman, but if Clara Croft hadn't been the unluckiest girl in the world, she'd have had lords to choose from. Only her uncle at whose place she met the smart folks, died, you see, and the fortune she ought to have had, vanished! I don't know the rights of the business, but vanish it did, somehow, and there she was, poor girl, left a handsome, well-born, penniless orphan."

I was destined to hear the particulars of her ill-luck from Clara herself by-and-by. In the meantime I had been so fortunate as to make a favourable impression on Mrs. Rawlinson, who had invited me to call at her house near Regent's Park when I should be in London again.

So it came to pass that, three months after our first meeting, Clara and I were engaged, and in another three months we were married.

It was when we were newly engaged that I first heard from Clara the full particulars of her story, and learned with surprise that the deceased uncle, of whom Mrs. Rawlinson had spoken with awe, was no other than Sir John Partington.

The associations roused by the name, my poor Walter, the suspicion that had attached to him with regard to the missing Romney, gave me a sorrowful twinge even in my new-found happiness. But what was my astonishment on learning that that very picture, so mysteriously carried off from Partington Hall and never again heard of, was intimately connected with Clara's lot.

I will give her little story in as few words as possible.

"Papa was an officer in the army. I was very young when he was killed in action. The small pension granted to his widow was all that my mother had to live and bring up her only child (myself) upon. Her brother John, however, on succeeding his father (who, displeased at my mother's marriage, had cut her out of his will), did all he could for us. He was getting elderly by this time, a childless widower, and my mother and I spent much of our time at Partington. My mother was his favourite sister, and after her death I became his sole companion. In spite of his straitened circumstances, my uncle saw a good deal of society at Partington, in London, and at the continental resorts he used to visit. It is to this that good Mrs. Rawlinson

refers," said Clara smiling, "when she says that I ought by rights to have lords to choose from."

Here a slight digression occurred, upon which it was unnecessary to enlarge.

When my dear girl was able to resume her story, she proceeded thus: "It was certainly a great change for me when my dear uncle died. I don't know that I cared much about missing the smart society that was now closed to me. But I did think myself peculiarly unlucky to have lost, as I had, the fortune that should have been mine.

"My uncle's circumstances, for a man in his position, had been poor. He had found the estate encumbered when he came to it, and he left it still more encumbered to his cousin, the present head of the family. The whole estate was strictly entailed, and the only property my uncle had power to will away, consisted of a small but valuable collection of paintings. By selling these in his lifetime, he might at once have put himself at ease in money matters. But he was proud of his Old Masters, and preferred even being 'hard up' to parting with one of them. The mysterious theft of the gem of the collection, a beautiful Romney, almost broke his heart, and made a nine-days' wonder at the time. He was still in the fever of seeking it, with the assistance of Scotland Yard, when his sudden death occurred. I had sincerely sympathised with him in his loss; but, till his will was read, I was ignorant what cause I had personally to deplore the misfortune. My uncle's only disposable property, his pictures, were divided between me and three other nieces, daughters of his other sister. To my share fell the gem of the collection, the Romney that of course you have heard all about—'Lady Hamilton as a Shepherdess.' My cousins realised their shares of the property at once, as our uncle had intended should be done. But I, who would have had a nice little fortune by the sale of the Romney, was out in the cold and virtually penniless. My uncle had, no doubt, each day expected to hear tidings of the lost picture, and therefore had not altered his will; and indeed he had nothing else to leave me, poor dear, and could only have altered his will by making me share what he had willed to his other nieces. But he died suddenly, as I have said. The inquiries he had been prosecuting after the missing picture I was of course unable to continue, and it seems indeed lost for ever. And so it happens," concluded Clara, with a sweet, wistful smile, "that my husband will have to take me with no portion at all."

Clara and I were married, and were as happy—yes, even as happy as, in pre-nuptial days, we had hoped to be.

Things prospered well. Our little son bid fair, we thought with the strict impartiality of fond parents towards an only child, to be a miracle of goodness, beauty, and intelligence. And so three years had gone by since our marriage, and five since my poor cousin

Walter's death, and I arrive at the period with which I opened this second part of my story. It was at this time that a dark cloud suddenly appeared in our sunny sky. I was laid low with typhoid.

For days my life hung on a thread. For weeks I was in danger of death. For weary months I was confined to my bed. And through the suffering and the weakness, I had always with me the terrifying thought, worse than either, that my strength and ability to work were our sole capital, that my life was not insured, that, in the rashness of health, I had laid by but little for a rainy day, and that, if I were taken, my beloved wife and child would be well nigh destitute. The nature of my illness and its long duration necessitated the employment of a substitute by Messrs. Preston. Another man was temporarily editing '*Preston's Magazine*,' and "advising" the firm as to MSS. Perhaps he would oust me altogether. What should I do, if I recovered to find this the case? What would Clara and the boy do if I died?

Oh, the torturing thoughts that haunted my sane, conscious moments, and found tongue in hurried, incoherent speech in my times of delirium! At last—at last—I turned the corner, and came slowly back along the strange, dreary, shadow-haunted path that leads from death to life. I had reached convalescence, and was able to leave my room, when, one fine May evening, Clara and I were spending a pleasant hour together in my own particular sanctum, I reclining in a cushioned chair, Clara doing some needlework. In this room were my books, my writing table, and various belongings of poor Walter's. There were his easels stacked in a corner—his oil and water-colour paint-boxes were there—and framed on the wall were many specimens of his skill. There was the head that had once hung at the Academy Exhibition, and that he had given me afterwards; there was "*The Young Rienzi*," unfinished, it is true, but vigorous and striking; and there was the life-size full-length of himself that he had done not long before his death. This, too, was in an unfinished state, and its defiant expression and somewhat aggressive attitude made it far less a favourite with me than the head he had given me. Still, it was his work, and so I had had it framed, and had hung it in my sanctum. I lay back in my chair, and my gaze dwelt on these two portraits of Walter.

"We must see about getting you to the seaside, dear Fred, as soon as you can bear the journey," said my household angel cheerfully. "The doctor won't hear of your going back to work till you've been away."

I heaved a troubled sigh. "My dear girl, think what the expenses of this four months' illness have been. Doctors, nurses, Brand's Essence, invalid luxuries innumerable. Our little nest-egg at the bank must be quite gone."

"No, dear, not quite. There is still something left."

There was a short silence. I lay back in my chair, my gaze still on Walter's two portraits of himself.

"How much I prefer that head of Walter to the life-size full-length," I said. "I was in two minds whether I should have the full-length framed, being so unfinished, and not a pleasing likeness. The background is particularly rough and hasty. Poor, dear fellow! How well I remember coming back from abroad and finding him at work on it."

I had always hitherto shrunk from telling Clara of my poor cousin's having been employed copying at Partington Hall at the time the Romney was missed, and of Sir John's evident suspicions. But now I proceeded to tell her the whole, even mentioning my cousin's admiration of the lost masterpiece. She listened with interest and sympathy, shaking her head in disapproval of Sir John's suspicion of Walter.

"I remember that my uncle used to speak of a young artist who had been making a copy of the Vandyck; but *my* suspicions always pointed to some of the upper servants, in league perhaps with some disreputable picture-dealer. Ah, Fred, if I could but recover my missing Romney, there would be an end of all our worries and anxieties." Then, rising, she felt my forehead and wrist with her cool, soft hand. "You have talked too much, dearest, and excited yourself. You are a little feverish again, and must go to bed at once, and try to get some quiet sleep."

I felt the force of Clara's advice, and went to bed.

Did the conversation we had been having, together with the slight access of fever from which I was suffering, produce the vivid, extraordinary, thrice-repeated dream of that night?

No. I prefer to consider the dream as sent to me through the gate of heaven by one for whom sleep and its visions are long past.

I dreamed that Clara and I were in the room in which we had passed the evening—my study—and that my cousin, Walter Ross, stood before us, a defiant, desperate look on his face, his right arm raised in menace. Behind him a woman's figure was hiding. I saw her old-fashioned, flowered skirts, and caught a glimpse of a lovely, roguish face peeping round his shoulder. Then, with a start, I woke.

By-and-by I dropped asleep again.

The dream was repeated, and at the same point I once more woke with a start. I lay awake some time, wondering at the dream and its repetition. Day was dawning when at length I slept again.

Instantly, I was back in my study with Clara. There stood Walter, more vivid, more impressive, than before, his eyes fierce, his arm raised. Once more I saw the glimpse of flowered skirts behind him, and the lovely, roguish face peeping round his shoulder.

But now, with a sudden impulse, I sprang upon him, dragged him aside. There stood a beautiful woman, in an old-world fancy dress, with a smile on her enchanting face. She looked at Clara and at me, and then, extending her white, dimpled arms and hands, dropped a torrent of gold coins, that rolled to our feet. With Clara's cry of joy still in my ears, I woke.

This dream held complete possession of me when, having breakfasted in bed and dressed by easy stages, I returned to the cushioned chair in my study, where I had reclined last evening. Again I lay back among the cushions, and, my mind full of the dream, gazed at Walter's full-length portrait of himself, which hung on the wall just facing me. The expression and attitude were very like those his dream-self had worn, the defiant eye, the hand, holding but a paint-brush, it is true, but raised in a manner one could fancy menacing.

What had been Walter's thoughts, what his mood, when he had so portrayed himself?

My musings went round and round the picture—round and round the strange repeated dream of last night—back to the old dead weeks, five years past, that had followed the loss of Sir John Partington's Romney. And then, suddenly, an idea was born of my brain—an idea that grew—and grew—till, with a throbbing heart and trembling limbs, I rose, moved the library steps beneath the portrait, mounted them, and managed, after a prolonged struggle, for my strength was much diminished, to get the large canvas down. I stood it against the wall, face in. I had remarked before this that no canvas was visible at the back, stout paper covering it and being fastened to the wooden stretcher at the sides. With my pocket-knife I cut a slit in the paper and proceeded to tear it away. I had scarcely had time to note that the canvas behind it was evidently old, and of a different quality from that used nowadays, when a letter fell out. I picked it up and opened it—it was addressed to no one—this was what I read.

"If this letter is ever found, it will be because my secret is discovered. I shall most likely be dead then, and unable to speak in extenuation of my crime. Therefore I write.

"I am no common thief. I took the picture, not for its value, but through a mad infatuation for its subject. I could not live without her. In a moment of half frenzy at her loveliness, I cut the canvas from its frame and brought it home. But then how to hide her from pursuit? I soon hit on a way. I fastened the canvas on a stretcher, placed it on an easel, and painted myself in front of her—to drive them off who would take her from me again. By-and-by, pursuit will cease, and then I shall remove myself, and gaze upon my enchantress once more. That is my story, and my crime. Whoever finds this letter will be endeavouring, no doubt, to restore the picture to its rightful owner. Send the canvas to L'Estranges', of Pall Mall.

They will know how to remove the recent painting without injury to what is beneath.

"I think I shall be dead when these words are read, and shall care little who knows of my strange infatuation, and my crime.—W. R."

I was standing in a half-dazed condition, with this letter in my hand, when Clara entered.

"Fred! What *have* you been doing? Why, what in the world——"

"It is recovered, Clara," I cried. "Your fortune is recovered, my own dearest! No more money cares or worries for you!"

And then, being in a weak state, I fainted.

For poor Walter's sake, we wished that the restoration to daylight of the missing Romney should be managed without publicity. I therefore called on a member of the firm of L'Estrange, a member who had known and liked Walter, and had not been one of those to suspect him in old days. I told this gentleman the whole story in confidence, and gave him Walter's strange confession to read. He was most kind and sympathetic, though extremely surprised, and considerably offered (in order to prevent scandal) to remove the recent painting from the canvas himself, instead of giving it to one of the subordinates. This he did with great skill and perfect success; and in due time, the daily papers announced that:

"Romney's masterpiece, 'Lady Hamilton as a Shepherdess,' the picture mysteriously stolen from the late Sir John Partington's collection, five years ago, and now recovered in a romantic manner, has been sent to Christie's by the present owner, and will be put up for sale on Tuesday next."

It was at a singularly propitious time that the famous picture went to the hammer. The London season was at its height: a lately published popular Life of Nelson, containing various letters and Nelsoniana not before given to the world, had set going a well-developed Nelson craze, which was just then at its fiercest: the picture-market was in a remarkably healthy state, Old Masters being in great demand and Romneys especially being at a premium; and a mob of millionaires, peers, picture-dealers, Jews and Gentiles, gathered at Christie's to bid for Romney's masterpiece and portrait of the woman whose name just then was on every tongue.

With these forcing influences at work, the picture was run up to £20,000, at which price it fell to a certain Mr. Harold Grumple, millionaire sausage merchant, with shops in every London suburb.

There's a little more to add.

Mr. Grumple, a year later, having turned his sausage shops into a company, and retired from active business, was desirous of having the little word "Sir," prefixed to his name. And one of the munificent and popular acts by which he was trying to tempt this little word out of his sovereign's gift, was the presentation of his lately acquired Romney to the nation. And so it fell out, as Clara

remarked the other day, when we were standing before the picture in the public gallery where it hangs, that my wife proved to be one of those exceptional persons, who, in contradiction of the old saw, both have their cake and eat it. She enjoys her fortune, a larger one than she ever dreamed the picture represented, and is able also to go and look at her quondam property whenever she chooses.

"And I couldn't do more than look at it, could I, Fred, even if it were still my own. I could simply prevent others from looking at it too. And I don't know that that would be any advantage, after all."

"Poor Walter," said I, as I gazed at the lovely pictured face. "It was a strange, a unique infatuation. Arch-coquette! I could almost fancy her smiling with gratified vanity over her latest adventure—smiling to think that, so long after her conquests in the flesh have ended, her mere portrait should have succeeded in tempting a young man of until then unimpeachable character to commit a robbery and elope with her."

WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT ?

"Look, Warder, forth from thy tower on high,
I must put to sea ere the light ;
So, read me the signs of the jewell'd sky—
Say, Watchman, what of the night ?"

"Not a breeze disturbeth the crimson rose ;
The rivers look fast asleep ;
The zephyrs are lull'd in benign repose
On the throbless breast of the deep.
In the placid valleys no voice is heard
Save the song of the tinkling rills ;
Not a leaf of the spectral trees is stirr'd
On the silent and sleeping hills.
Unclouded and calm is each radiant star
Begemming the arch on high ;
And the queenly moon in her silver car
Glides soft through an amethyst sky—
Ere the day shall break and the shadows pass,
Or ever the dawn grow bright,
Go fearless forth on the sea of glass—
'Tis a heavenly gentle night !"

"Oh, methinks I hear the uprising gale
In its wild and sudden might !
Hark, Warder, hark to its frantic wail !
Say, Watchman, what of the night ?"

"Yes, the Spirit of change in a fell eclipse
His remorseless crest uprears ;
And a breath from his false and faithless lips
Has unparadised all the spheres !
The Zephyrs, affrighted from slumber's thrall,
Have their doleful dirge intoned ;
The bejewell'd sky is an inky pall,
And the queenly moon's dethroned.
Like a horde of wolves do the waves appear—
So clamorous, white, and brave ;
And the sea of glass is a desert drear,
Where the savage creatures rave.
From the clouds' dark bosom the lightnings leap,
In flashes that daze the sight ;
Oh, venture not on the faithless deep,
'Tis a wild, terrific night !"

"Nay, Warder, nay ! A divine command
Hath come from above to me ;
'Tis writ in the stars by a Heavenly Hand
That I put this night to sea.
So, whether the sky be clear or dark,
Or whatever fate befall ;
To God's dear love I commend my bark,
And go forth at duty's call !"

Such, such is the course of our earthly task,
Alternately dark and bright ;
And full many a cause have we still to ask --
Oh, Watchman, what of the night ?



RISING EARLY AND MARRYING EARLY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH MARRIED,"
ETC., ETC.

LUTHER said that to rise betimes and to marry early are two things which no wise man ever regrets doing.

As to the first a friend of the writer's, who is anything but a fool, got up a few mornings ago with a look of wretchedness quite pathetic upon his face. "I mistook my watch," he said, in answer to anxious inquiries, "and have got up an hour too soon."

If there are early risers who are "stupid all the forenoon and conceited all the afternoon," it would surely be better for them to remain in bed until they were "done"; until the stupidity and conceit had left them. Of course, the early bird does catch the worm, but it is the early worm that it catches.

In this, as in all other things, we should "turn to scorn the madness of extremes."

As a rule it is better not to get up until the world is aired and the servants have finished their dusting. The Iron Duke's advice that when a man turns in bed he should turn out is excellent for a young soldier or any other youth, but it is not good for everyone. Should a mother, who has been kept awake half the night by a teething infant, turn out whenever she turns, or a literary man who finds that his best thoughts come to him the hour before he rises in the morning?

Before getting up to begin the day it is well to arrange one's plans for the wise spending of it. Then there are many people like Thompson, the author of the "Castle of Indolence," who used to say that he had no object for getting up early. He did not value, as did Sir Walter Scott, the hour between seven and eight o'clock as a precious one for work, or think it the time when the back of the day's task should be broken.

Certainly if one rises early he should go to bed early, for it is false economy of time to deprive oneself of necessary sleep.

But what is necessary sleep? That depends upon your age, your health, the work you do and the way you sleep; for there is quality of sleep as well as quantity, and one man will sleep as much dreamless sleep in an hour as another will in three or four who sees visions or is attacked by a nightmare. We know what is laid down as the regulation quantity of sleep. It is six hours for a man, seven for a woman, and eight for a fool; but many of us are foolish in this respect.

When staying at an hotel one may notice young men who, though

they are neither at work nor at play, but snoozing in a chair in a crowded smoking-room, will not go to bed until one or two o'clock in the morning. It looks as if they had bound themselves under a curse not to do so. This is a sure way of creating a habit of sleeplessness—for sleeplessness is a habit, and one that is produced by late hours—putting us past our sleep. It is nonsense to say that we cannot go to sleep if we retire early. Rather, it is harder to do this if we so late take rest and eat the bread of carelessness in the shape of an indigestible supper.

Do not excite your brain with mental work before your usual time for sleep, have a good conscience, and at least an hour of beauty sleep before twelve o'clock, and you will be able to rise, if not with the lark, certainly long before the sluggard has nerved himself to make the awful plunge—out of bed.

Nor is it true, as Luther says, that a wise man never regrets marrying early. An Irish peasant, who had plenty of mother wit as well as national wit, came by bitter experience to think with Lord Beaconsfield that "early marriages are to be deprecated, especially for men." The particular Pat referred to, who had taken to himself a wife when he was only nineteen, said, "I'll niver marry agin so young if I wor to live to the age of Methuselah!" And he kept his word; he was eighty when he married a second time.

A man who lived to a very advanced age being asked to account for his longevity said that he attributed it to the fact that he never stood when he might have sat, that he married late and was soon left a widower.

When two "infants" in the eyes of the law marry, they resemble one stem of sweet pea trying to prop up another. They should wait until their age is less tender, and they have come to years of discretion.

Certainly, if a man puts off marriage very long he is liable to fall into that habit of celibacy which like other bad habits is hard to break away from. In this habit he will probably remain until he is about sixty years of age, when a great desire will seize him to know what marriage is like, and he will propose right and left to everything in petticoats until at last he is picked up, not for himself, but for his money or his position, or because someone is tired of "Miss" and wants the novel sensation of putting "Mrs." before her name.

It is not natural for a young girl to marry an elderly man. A father said to his daughter, "When it is time for you to marry, I won't allow you to throw yourself away upon one of these frivolous young fellows I see about. I will select for you a staid, sensible middle-aged man. What would you say to one about fifty years of age?"

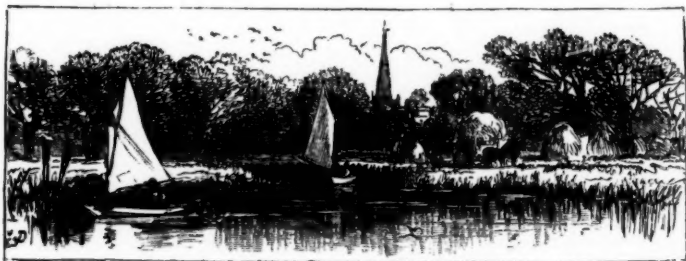
"Well, father," replied the ingenuous girl, "I would prefer, if it is the same to you, two of twenty-five."

Perhaps the best advice one could give to a young man in reference to early or late marriage would be to say, "Wait until you can't wait any longer—wait, that is, until she come with smiles so sweet and manners so gracious that you cannot wait any longer, and then marry, and may you be happy ever after!"

It is said that in the upper middle and higher classes, men do not now marry as early as they used, and that too many of them do not marry at all. We do not think, however, that men in any considerable numbers are on strike against matrimony. If they are, it is because they are afraid of the possible extravagance of wives. That this is so I learn from a conversation which was lately overheard in a ball-room. A lady of a not very retiring disposition was dancing with a middle-aged bachelor. She asked him straight out, "Why don't you marry? could you not afford to keep a wife?"

"My innocent young thing," was his reply, "I could afford to keep half-a-dozen wives, but I could not afford to pay the milliner's bills of one."

A mother managed to get several daughters off her hands at an early age by telling young men who came to dine with her as a great secret that her daughters made all the puddings in her house, and also all their own gowns. If girls are content to begin matrimonial life upon the income at which their parents began, and mothers train them to be suitable wives for poor men, men will rush to the matrimonial altar. They will marry early and as often as they can.



A SOLDIER'S WEDDING.

BY C. E. C. WEIGALL.

IT was a fresh March day in Malta, one of the few days of perfect weather wherewith the inhabitants of that scorching island are blessed during the year. Sea and sky met in one intense blue on the horizon; above and below, white houses and treeless roads of barren dusty whiteness that tired the eye of the beholder.

But the fresh north wind was blowing across the sea, touching the thick leaves of prickly pear to beauty, and falling from the grey cliff where nothing but the caper would grow, ruffling at last the close-cropped hair on the head of Sergeant Scart of the Gunners, who was standing waiting nervously on the quay for the big P. & O. boat anchored in the harbour to get pratique, so that he might board her. Every inch of the ship's side was crowded with eager faces, fresh and tanned from the long voyage, eager to go on shore and see the sights that are so fascinating to a casual passer-by—so unutterably wearisome to an inhabitant.

He scanned every face eagerly, and when at last he caught no glimpse of the one for which he was searching, his strong face quivered with disappointment; and pushing his way to the front he sprang into a dghaisao and ordered the brown-faced Maltese boatmen to pull him over to the *Vienna*.

No one, not even his greatest friend, could have called Sergeant Scart good-looking. But his face in its almost pathetic ugliness was so honest and straightforward that one forgot that his hair was of the hue that is called carrots, and that his hazel eyes were veiled by the light lashes that always accompany such colouring.

He carried his uniform well, for he was proud of being known as one of the smartest N.C.O.'s in the Gunner company to which he belonged. A dashing soldier he would never be. But his was the perfection of kit, the brilliance of buttons and swagger cane that go for much in the ranks of the men who fight the big guns. And if he was in no sense a remarkable athlete or a clever scientist, he was at least a power for good among his fellows, and a mechanical influence on parade.

He was very nervous now and was not at his best, as he fumbled at his red moustache, or jerked clumsily at the buttons on his serge. He had come to meet the girl who had promised to marry him five years before, when he had left home to come abroad. They had been very faithful for that long time—he with the faith of which only such natures as his are capable; natures that give everything and expect nothing in return.

And she was free at last to come to him, since her invalid mother, who had been entirely dependent upon her, had died. And though her letters to him had not been so frequent of late, yet she had written to tell him that she was coming out to him by the *Vienna*.

As he climbed up the ship's side, he was reflecting shyly that five years is a long time out of a man's life, and in that period probably both he and she had altered. Still he felt sure that he would remember her again, for her lovely colouring, pure and brilliant as a bit of porcelain, and the low hanging curls of hair, and the long black lashes that swept the peach down of her cheek, were fresh in his memory.

The decks of the *Vienna* were almost deserted save for the crew and the stewards and the stewardesses, who were chatting loudly to one another, enjoying their brief space of freedom from querulous seasick women, and men who expected to find the comfort of their clubs in the narrow space of a seagoing passenger steamer.

But Molly Kean was certainly not visible, though his anxious eyes sought her at every turn. There was indeed a girl standing at the top of the companion who had a great look of her, and as the Sergeant caught sight of her, he stepped eagerly forward, only to fall back with an indistinct murmur of apology as she turned her face full upon him. For she was so deeply scarred with small-pox that her features were blurred like the smudging of some delicate miniature.

Scart glanced at her again, half puzzled, half in sudden growing terror. The little figure was shapely and trim in its neat serge gown, but far thinner than Molly's had ever been. And the hair, arranged in a tight line across her forehead, gave her face a hard look that was most unbecoming. She was perhaps Molly's cousin—some relation—and in that case, where was Molly?

His heart stopped beating for an instant as she came forward timidly to meet him, and he dropped his eyes as he saw the pallor of her face and the whiteness of her twisted lips as she strove to speak to him. Her eyes reminded him somehow of the Molly of five years back, who had been as dainty as a bird and as yellow headed as a patch of corn in the sunlight.

"You are surely Sergeant Scart?" she said, and he started, for her voice was like Molly's with the bird-like melody of that voice dumb.

"Ay," he said slowly.

"I am Molly Kean's nearest relation," went on the girl breathlessly.

"Her sister? Ay, I mind she had a sister," said Scart again.

"They call me Mary," she continued, avoiding the dawning horror of his eyes, as the facts of the case began to dawn upon him. "And I—I have something to say to you."

"If you mean to say that my Molly hasn't come," cried the man, gripping her by the arm, unmindful of the watching crowd of stewards, "I'll—I'll——"

"*Your* Molly hasn't come," said the girl mournfully, her words dropping low and muffled on his ears. "She—she changed her mind——"

"She changed her mind? Ay, she met someone as could give her a better position than a poor Sergeant of gunners. Ay, I know her like—faithless and untrue as the very animals would scorn to be," cried Scart dramatically. "And she's married to some rich fellow as could keep her in silks and jewellery, and let her lie down on feathers, and eat softly—I know her sort. She's rotten to the core!"

The girl laid her hand tremulously on his, and released her arm from his grip, and he stopped dead short.

"Poor lass, dunna tremble so; I'm but a rough chap, I know, but I loved her so, you see; and the quarters is all ready, and the banns called, and the wedding fixed up for to-morrow, and the cake bought and all the victuals," he groaned heavily. "Ay, but it's only what might have been expected, after all, for I was always an unlucky sort of chap—blundering fellow too, to go on like this, and you so ill and all, and coming out so kind-like to break the news!"

For she had staggered back against the rail, and he could see by the fluttering of the nerves in her throat that she was struggling with a mad desire for tears. And he felt sure that she was wondering what was to become of her, since she had come on this quixotic journey, when she might so easily have written to him to break the bad news. And for the life of him, he could not imagine what was to become of her during the time that must necessarily elapse between that day and the arrival of the next England-bound steamer.

But, as usual, his natural chivalry came to his assistance, and he was determined to put her at her ease at once, and not to show her by word or look that he was at all disturbed.

"You come along home wi' me, lass," he said kindly. "I can give ye a welcome if it's good enough for ye. And Mrs. Jameson, as was to have had Molly, will look after ye. Ay, she as was to have had Molly——"

He turned away, stabbed with sharp pain, and the girl followed him with drooping head and veil close drawn across her face.

Sergeant Scart roused himself as they drove through the streets, and pointed out to his companion the various points of interest along their route—the monuments and churches, and the tree-bound cemetery where lay the English dead.

When they drove up the straight white road that led to Tigne Fort, and the carrizza paused at the Married Block, the Sergeant was painfully conscious of interested heads thrust from door and window to peer at the new bride.

He helped Mary and her modest luggage bravely and carefully out, and going into the three-roomed quarter, closed the door behind them.

Mary drew her veil a little closer about her face, and looked furtively about the room. The Sergeant had made his scanty home as beautiful as his scanty savings could compass, and she recognised many instances of self-denial exercised at the expense of a pipe here and a glass there, as she looked about her.

The table was covered with a scarlet and blue cloth, and on the cloth was set a brass tray, on which was placed a gaudy Japanese tea service with a silver spoon in each saucer.

The chimney-piece was draped with a bright Pulkhari, and adorned by wonderful Oriental vases of brilliant colouring.

The whole Division had evidently been photographed for the Sergeant's benefit, for round the walls were hung numerous pictures of rank and file in rigid positions of a propriety that is beyond the reach of a smile.

In the very centre of the mantelshef stood the portrait of a girl in a white muslin gown and a shady hat, whose yellow hair was coiled and curled about her head, and whose bright complexion set off a dainty little face and *retroussé* nose.

It was Molly, and Scart caught the photograph from the frame and made a gesture as though he would tear it across. The girl in the heavy mourning gown stepped forward with a sharp cry and caught his hand.

"Don't," she said. "Molly is not all bad. Can you not imagine that something might have happened to her?—some catastrophe—something that might have prevented her from fulfilling her promise—and yet that was not disloyalty, never disloyalty?"

"I cannot understand your fine talk," said Scart doggedly. "To my mind, either a girl is true or she isn't, and Molly isn't. The Molly I loved would have come to me through thick and thin, through fire and water. For she loved me—or at least I reckoned she did—though like most things in the world maybe she was deceiving. But make the tea, lass, for there's no need to pine because I'm crossed i' love."

The girl busied herself with the kettle and the tea-caddy, still with her hat low upon her brow, and if he had not been so preoccupied with his grief, the Sergeant would have noticed how often and how miserably her eyes wandered towards the pretty girl, smiling from her painted frame. But even through his trouble he recognised a faint pleasure in seeing a woman's figure flitting about the room, setting things in order with deft fingers, and if he checked his glance of pride towards the neat kitchen, and the pretty white bed-room that led off it, yet it was to set the girl more at her ease, that he began to talk of indifferent matters, and even to help her with the white cloth that she was laying.

At that moment there came a knock at the door, and Scart went to open it. The Number One of his detachment stood sheepishly in the doorway under the verandah.

"Beg your pardon, Sergeant," he said, hiding a smile behind his hand, "but the Colonel wishes to speak to ye. There's been a bit of a turn up when you was out, and the Adjutant says as 'ow a word from you——"

"All right, Green," said Scart shortly, for the man's eyes were peering curiously into the shaded room. "I'll be there in a moment." And with a word of explanation to his visitor, he buckled on his belt, and departed, and she heard the heavy fall of his feet die away on the stone paving.

The moment was hers, and on that tense instant might hang the issues of years, the happiness of two souls. She sped into the little bed-room, blushing to find it so neat and white and dainty, and after a short space emerged again.

But the Mary who entered the little parlour was no longer the same hard-featured woman of the voyage; she was a faint shadow of the Molly on the chimney-piece. Her white muslin gown fitted her slim figure to perfection, and her short hair was curled and waved about her face, and in the dim light the scars seemed very faint.

She sat down in a chair with her back to the light, and folded her twitching hands upon her knee, waiting for the Sergeant's return. The dusk fell, and the gun at St. Angelo boomed across the harbour. The bugles in the square took up retreat, and the call went ringing over cliff and island, swelling and swaying on the wind, like the echo from ghostly bugle calls of other days. The lamps flashed out in the town, and below, in the quarantine harbour, the hoarse scream of the siren announced that the *Vienna* was about to weigh her anchor and steam majestically out to the gorgeous East.

And at last Sergeant Scart returned.

"A'm sorry, lass," he said gently, from the door, "but things was a little askew up there. But art sitting i' the dark? Turn up the lamp, will ye please?"

"Not yet," said Mary swiftly. "Oh, please not yet. Sit down a moment—the tea can brew. I want to talk to you."

"Ay, drive ahead," said Scart, as he flung down his belts with a clatter and subsided gingerly into one of the new deck chairs. "If Molly had proved to be another such a one as you, so neat and deft and kindly, I should have run a chance of happiness, a rare chance; but she never could have been same as you——"

"As me?"

There was a pathos in the girl's voice that went to his heart.

"As me—with my face—my horrible face—my disfigurements?"

"Why, lass, he would be a poor sort of a man as would look at the face when heart's i' the right place," cried Scart, stoutly. "A soldier has no call to marry for a face, for that sort does not wear, and the prettiness comes off 'em at the first rub. It wasna' for her face that I loved my Molly. And I reckon it wasna' for that reason as she loved me."

He laughed a little ruefully, and the girl in the corner began to speak again.

"I had small-pox only two months back, and the doctors say I shall lose most of the scars in a year's time; but now—now—who would look at me?"

"Why they'd have no call to look higher than thy neat figure," said the Sergeant gallantly, "and thy quick hands, and thy kindly heart. I reckon that if Molly had been like ye, she would have stuck to me through thick and thin."

"And if Molly had caught small-pox, would you have still loved her? If she was ugly like me?"

"Me?" said Scart wonderingly. "Me cease to love Molly? And ever so much more in her trouble too. Why, lass, Molly must have told ye queer tales of me if she made ye think I was that sort of chap."

There was a click from the corner as the lamp shot into ruddy flame, and Scart's jaw dropped as he stared at an erect figure in a white gown, that seemed to have sprung out of the past of his life.

The face of the girl before him had melted into a wonderful smile under the soft cloud of yellow hair, and her plainness was transformed with all the cleverness of a woman in love. Scart, trembling, read the love-light in her eyes, and rising, he staggered towards her like a man in a dream.

"Great heavens—it's Molly," he said, "my Molly, I believe. Whatever did you go for to torment me—and to say as she was false——"

He broke off, and she took up the word saucily.

"I never said she was false. It was you, all you; you made it all out, and I thought of course that you must know best——"

And then she broke into sobbing.

"Molly," said the sergeant reverently, "my dear," and stooping, he drew her face to his breast, and laid his lips upon her crop of growing curls, that he now saw were as yellow as a cornfield in June. "I must have been a fool not to know you, for now I say as how you are every bit the same, with your pretty clinging ways. I was a fool—a terrible fool."

"Oh, be a fool all your life, Jem dear," cried Molly. "Be blind to my faults, as you have been to my face."

"Nay, lass, never blind to thy face; nor to thy clear, loving true eyes for ever and ever."

* * * * *

And when Mrs. Jameson knocked at the wall an hour later to discover if they were ready for the tasty little supper of tripe and bacon that she had prepared for them, Molly and the Sergeant started guiltily apart, for to them the hour had been as sixty sweet brief seconds spent in Paradise, the precursor of their wedded happiness that was to begin next day.

OLD AND NEW OUTLINES.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," "IN THE VALLEY OF THE RHONE," ETC., ETC.

NEARLY three centuries have rolled away since that memorable night when Frederick and Elizabeth paced the Castle Terrace, in close debate as to whether he should accept the crown of Bohemia : or rather in earnest protest on her part that he should not do so. We know that it availed nothing ; for once Elizabeth's pleading was powerless ; the stars in their course fought against her ; *it was to be*.

The crown was accepted ; Frederick's ambition was fulfilled, and his beloved princess, the light of his eyes and the treasure of his heart, became queen : Queen of Bohemia. As such he wished her to go down to posterity, and his wish was granted. It was to him as the apples of Sodom—ashes of the Dead Sea fruit. From the day that he became King of Bohemia his sun declined. A short triumph—scarcely even that—a Royal Entry into the Capital—a proclamation and a crowning : and at once the clouds rose and the sky became overcast, and storms and tempests raged ; their lives henceforth never knew the blessing of peace.

Even when their life in Holland seemed to possess something of repose, it was the mere shadow of the substance. They were in monetary embarrassment, never able to, as the saying runs, make ends meet. Never an hour passed, but they looked back with eyes of longing and regret to the days of Heidelberg Castle, with their intense happiness and freedom. It was a paradise they had deliberately thrown away, and over and over again they compared themselves to Adam and Eve after they had left the Garden of Eden. Had Milton's star risen above the horizon no doubt Elizabeth would have quoted him many a time, and his higher strains would have been more in unison with her mind than the greater Shakespeare she could not altogether admire. Often would she have dwelt upon those last sad lines :

"They hand in hand, with lingering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way."

Often they must have felt in a similar condition, and, figuratively speaking, looked back with vain sighs and tears to that period of their lives when they had not as yet eaten of the Tree of Knowledge. They were "haunted by vain regrets and pallid sorrowful faces."

Yet some blessings remained to them. They still possessed each other, and—rare event—misfortune did not weaken their mutual affection. A proverb tells us that when Poverty comes in at the door Love flies out at the window, but it was never so with Frederick and Elizabeth.

And their poverty was after all very gilded. They still held a sort of Court and dwelt in luxurious apartments at the Hague—as far as the times had advanced in luxury: a very different state of things from the self-indulgence of the present age. Many children were born to them, and Elizabeth was much taken up with the cares of maternity. These must almost have worn her out. It is a question whether Elizabeth with her intense devotion to her husband was a very fond mother, though good and earnest she always was. That swarm of children must have taxed her large heart as well as her nervous energies. She could scarcely have been thirty when a dozen played about her. Henry was undoubtedly her favourite, even as he was her first-born; but he was a noble and winning child, the joy and hope of both father and mother.

As Elizabeth said after the Battle of the White Hill: "*All is not lost, my Frederick. Take heart of grace.*" Yet it was then that they forgot all about poor Rupert, who had not long opened his eyes to the world, and fled, apparently without giving him a thought: or probably supposing that he was in safe custody and would turn up at the right moment. But it was not in the decrees of heaven that Rupert should be deserted, or that his life should be cut short. He was reserved to make a noise in the world, though even in his case it was not to be a noise to much purpose; the stars were ever more or less against him. And so, as the last carriage went off with the fugitives, poor infant Rupert was thrown into the boot by a good Samaritan in the form of Baron d'Hona, the King's Chamberlain, who found the child, deserted by his nurse, asleep on the ground.

And Rupert no doubt before long made it apparent that he was neither comfortable nor in his proper place in the boot; and we will hope that Elizabeth gathered him to her bosom with tears of repentance. For in after years he was to be almost her sole remaining consolation: the most affectionate and most filial of all her sons.

Their life at the Hague was not only one of regret. Frederick was badly treated by Ferdinand; badly treated by James of England; poor weak, vain, silly James, grotesque in person, uncouth in manner. Charles was equally useless when James had gone to his account and he sat on the throne of his father—one can hardly put it in the plural. He was too much like that father in some ways, and had a passion for useless negotiations. In James it really arose from a fondness for scribbling; in Charles it was inherited.

If Henry, the pride and hope of England, had only lived, how different it might all have been. Frederick would never have appealed to him in vain, and England would have had a splendid monarch upon the throne. Whether he was poisoned, or whether he died "*By the Visitation of God,*" the end was the same—he was lost to his country. And poor banned Frederick looked in vain for his deliverer, eating out his heart in hopeless longing, until Gustavus Adolphus arose and carried all before him.

But by that time Frederick was much broken in spirit; even restoration to the throne of Bohemia and the Palatinate would not have meant to him what it had meant once—honour and glory and unbounded happiness.

Three years before, he had gone through one of the greatest troubles—perhaps the very greatest—of his life. What could be more terrible than to see his beloved Henry—his first-born and his favourite—drowned before his eyes? To hear that imploring “Oh,



BASLE.

father, save me! Oh, save me! Save me, father!” yet see his boy go down for ever beneath the waves, with the last sad look at his father upon his face, and the despairing cry upon his lips. One almost wonders how he survived it: how he did not go down with his arms locked about his boy that they might enter eternity together, and it should be said of them as of Saul and Jonathan of old: Lovely in their lives, in their deaths they were not divided. For lovely their lives were in their devotion to each other.

It is certain that Frederick never recovered the blow; never was

the same again. His boy's voice crying to him to save him for ever rang in his ears. For the remainder of his life—some three years only—he would constantly start out of his sleep, having lived over again in his dreams the whole awful tragedy: would awaken sitting up in bed, bathed in perspiration, hearing again that terrible cry, his arms extended as though to grasp the sinking form. What more awful experience than this—what blow more crushing? To see his favourite son sinking before his eyes, imploring his father to save him—his tenderly loved father, on whom from childhood he had rested as on a strong rock of defence, yet failing him at the supreme moment of his life.

Frederick never really recovered the agony of that hour. The awful shock, the grief and sorrow, paralysed the sources of life and health; his constitution was undermined; he lived on, it is true—we do not die there and then of our shocks and our sorrows: Heaven does not smite with both hands, but gives us time to set our house in order—Frederick lived on: he had still his beloved wife to draw him earthwards; but his powers of resistance were over.

So when he went off to the wars that last time with hope once more in the ascendant, the dark clouds apparently about to roll away and leave his life's horizon once more clear and brilliant, it was too much when at one fell blow the cup of fortune was again and for ever dashed from his lips. There could be no reaction from that, and he died: died calling upon his wife, to whom he had been so faithful and constant, with an unswerving affection that must be reckoned amongst the great virtues of his life.

Certainly the stars could not have been in favourable conjunction when Frederick was born. And that poor wife was not permitted to smooth his dying pillow; neither to him nor to her was that consolation given. He went off to the wars alone, and Elizabeth was to follow with Gustavus Adolphus, sharing the triumphal march of the Conqueror.

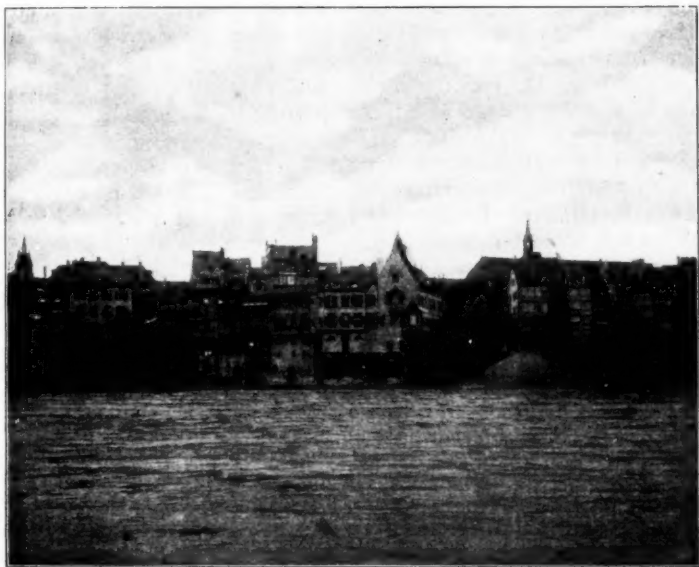
And what a meeting it would have been between her and Frederick; what a re-union; what a restoration of lost ideals, of hopes deferred, of heart-sickness healed. All hung on the life of one man, and all was for ever shattered by that one man's death—the death of Gustavus. Elizabeth did not even know that Frederick was ill; knew nothing until all was over, and her sun went down in its meridian; when in her broken-hearted sorrow she gave expression to the historical words: "I can never have more contentment in this world, for God knows I had none but that which I took in his company."

Twice in three years she was called upon to bear blows amongst the heaviest felt by mortals: the loss of her first-born, and the death of her husband. But she was to live on with her sorrow; to survive her beloved husband for more than thirty years; dying at last bravely, even as she had lived, in her chair, in that little

house of Lord Leicester's—the cynical Leicester—in Leicester fields. Who met her at the entrance to the Dark Valley? Perhaps Frederick and Henry, hand in hand, for whom, for half her life-time she had longed and waited with that heart-hunger known only to those who have suffered in like manner.

It is all one of the most romantic, one of the most intensely interesting episodes in history, one of the most tragic and pathetic.

Two centuries and more had rolled away; Frederick and Elizabeth had receded into the background of history—quite ancient history—their forms shadowy, their sorrows a mere record, the large-heartedness and generosity of their disposition now merely termed Quixotic,



THE RHINE AT BASLE.

because they were really noble-minded and crimes and vices never stained the pages of their lives—a great part of three centuries had rolled away, when we stood upon the Terrace that Frederick and Elizabeth had paced together that fatal night in May, 1619.

The scene they looked upon was little altered. The river still flowed in its course in precisely similar lines; the outlines of the wooded heights were the same; the nightingales still sang in their season; the Terrace itself was unchanged.

But the Castle was in ruins, and reminded one of the ruin they had made of their lives. Every crumbling outline seemed to speak of Frederick and Elizabeth. Their influence and individuality

appeared to haunt every stone, the very air itself. One imagined their faces, sad and subdued, in every broken window. Standing on the Terrace, looking at the ruined Frederick's-building, staring from an empty casement it was easy to imagine the face of the little Henry, and hear his voice, as with outstretched arms he had cried that memorable night, with ripples of happy childish laughter, "May I come? May I come?"

E. equally felt the influence, for it was a favourite page of history with her no less than with us. Frederick and Elizabeth were amongst her favourite characters; Prince Rupert was one of her heroes.

"I wish," she said very softly, after we had long contemplated the scene, "that Elizabeth would appear to me as she appeared to the old gate-keeper you have told me of. I believe I should almost have power to draw her into visible contact, so strongly is her personality impressed upon me; all her history, all she did and all she suffered. Do you think she would appear to me?" asked E., her eyes growing large and intent, peering, as it were, with longing gaze into the invisible.

"For us a ghost has never come," we could only reply. "We have taken the witching hour, watched and waited, tried to pierce the veil, implored them silently to appear, but always in vain. Never the faintest shadow of an apparition, never the motion of a breath or the whisper of a word has come for all our watching and waiting; sometimes under the dark skies of night and the silent stars, sometimes in our secret chamber with doors closed and all silent. We have longed only for the flutter of an angel's wing, but nothing has ever come, and probably never will come."

"It is not given to every one to have their vision opened," said E. "It is indeed only given to the few; for I am content to follow in the footsteps of Dr. Johnson and to believe that such things are, and the weight of evidence is greater than the promptings of reason. But if they do appear, these ghosts from the land of shadows, no doubt they also have their times and seasons. There must be order in the spiritual world as in the world of nature. So if Elizabeth appears—and old Fritz your quondam gatekeeper declared she did so to him: people in that rank of life do not often imagine ghosts or think about them—no doubt it is just at the time when their fate was hovering in the balance; perhaps on the anniversary of that very night when they paced the Terrace together, and Frederick would not yield to Elizabeth's pleading, and that terrible decision was come to. Will you bring me here some time in the month of May, when the nightingales are singing? Then we will keep vigil on the Terrace at the witching hour, as you did years ago with Herr Karl. But I should be a better companion than he. His influence was adverse; even old Fritz said so, who worshipped him; mine would be the opposite. If Elizabeth ever appears, I am convinced she would do so for me."

"And the Trompeter?" we suggested.

"The dear Trompeter!" cried E. enthusiastically. "I love him for his fidelity; for daring to raise his eyes so far above him. I don't believe Elizabeth was as angry with him as she pretended to be. But, alas, the whole story hangs on slender threads and needs corroboration. I almost tremble lest it should be mythical. It is too beautiful and romantic to be anything but true and real."

"In history it is always wise to believe everything one wishes to believe. There is no other way of keeping one's interest alive and ensuring peace of mind."

"By far the best way," said E. "Every new history seems to be written to disprove the previous historian: so that by and by we might come to believe, if we would, there was no Elizabeth of England and no Elizabeth of Bohemia, that the Reformation was a myth and the Massacre of St. Bartholomew an idle dream. But will you bring me here some May-day, when the nightingales are singing, and it is time for Elizabeth to appear?" she reiterated.

And as our motto in life is Peace with Honour, of course we promised. It was impossible to associate ghosts and apparitions with this July weather, and we decided that a midnight vigil would bear no fruit.

"But even in broad daylight and the month of July Elizabeth's influence seems to fill the place like an atmosphere," said E. "I should like to come here and write her history, and I believe that her unseen hand would guide the pen and form the words—think of the facts and circumstances that would be revealed to us!"

"A sort of Planchette arrangement," we basely remarked.

"Cruelly unkind!" reproved the arum lily. "That is indeed passing from the sublime to the ridiculous. We must spend a few months here, and then I will prove to you that Elizabeth is still a power in the place. What happy months they would be! I wonder if we could find a house within the precincts, or even a lodgment?"

Then we turned from the Terrace and the river and the wooded heights: and it was really as though an invisible influence held us back and would not let us escape. It was only passing from one influence to another, from the Terrace to the matchless courtyard, which indeed seems the very home in which Romance was born and winged her flight through the world. There is nothing like it, nothing at all to approach it in the ruins of Europe.

To-day, in the brilliant sunlight, which pencilled such wonderful shadows upon the pavements—shadows of faded glory—the courtyard, even in the garish light of day, looked the embodiment of a dream. At the further end stood the entrance gateway, and the tower clock struck the unromantic hour of ten, and in the archway stood the new keeper in the very spot where years ago we had seen and many a time conversed with old Fritz: Fritz who had gone to join the shadows of Frederick and Elizabeth, and the faithful

Trompeter, and his beloved Herr Karl ; leaving us to the only ghosts that ever haunt us in this world—the ghosts of memory, whose name is legion.

The Museum was to our left, and its guardian stood in the doorway, perhaps watching our absorbed, spell-bound attitude, perhaps paying humble devotion to the arum lily. His very gaze seemed an invitation to enter and inspect his treasures, as he stood with the door wide open.

We found it full of interest, and here again lost ourselves in a past world. The little picture-gallery had many a portrait we should have liked to carry away with us. Elizabeth and Frederick, Prince Rupert, Charles-Louis and Maurice—they were all there, and many another. Amongst them was an interesting portrait of Mary Queen of Scots taken when she was almost a girl : a charming face, in which beauty seemed to rival innocence. The guardian, who could not do too much for E., brought a ladder and took it down, and placed it in a broad light ; then took down others at her bidding.

"I wonder whether Elizabeth brought that with her from England?" said E. pointing to the Mary.

In the pure and pleasing face there was no promise or foreshadowing of the after-life, no trace of sadness in the eyes to give warning of the fateful ending. Perhaps it was too soon to expect it in this early youth ; Destiny may have her limits for shadow-casting.

"How long has it been here?" she asked of the keeper.

"It is not known, gracious lady," he replied in his quaint German, always so full of superlatives, "but it is certainly over 200 years."

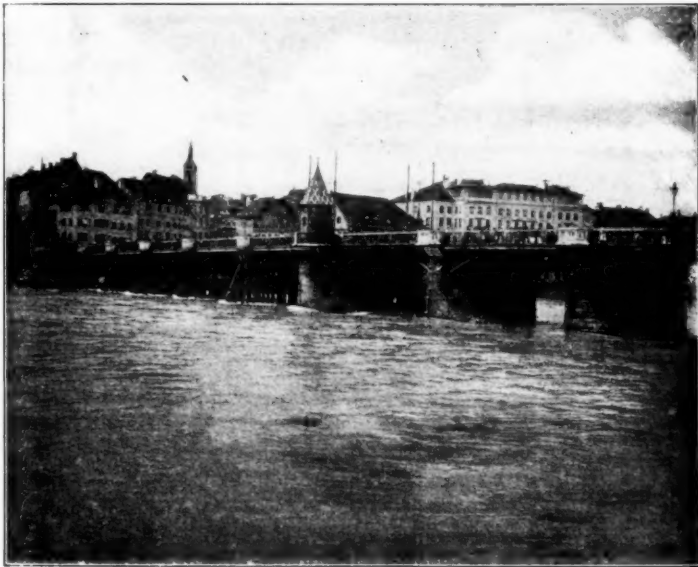
"Then no doubt Elizabeth did bring it over with her," said E. "It is pleasant to think so. Elizabeth was always large-hearted and generous," turning to us : "always full of sympathy for those in trouble—I dislike the word quixotic when applied to her, for her actions were regulated by principle, not by impulse. I daresay her heart often ached for the sorrows of her grandmother, though they were over before her time. Nothing is more natural than that she should have brought this memento with her. Is it not thought so?" to the keeper.

"I have always felt sure of it myself," he replied. He was a man well fitted for his post, this keeper, took a keen interest in his surroundings, appeared intimate with the lives of all his personages. It was evidently a delight to find anyone equally interested in them, and had E. asked him to unhook every portrait—and there were many—he would have obeyed her.

There were many bygone relics in the rooms besides portraits, and he knew the history of them all. This was a different interest and atmosphere from that on the Terrace : it was more tangible, more visible ; appealed to the mind rather than the spirit : it was Elizabeth and her company in the flesh, not in Shadowland : but it was equally

difficult to tear oneself away from it. Not till long past and when the keeper's wife had twice peered into the rooms with anxious face and hungry eyes, did we turn towards the doorway.

"Es ist nichts!" said the guardian, looking reprovingly towards the spot where the substantial form of his spouse had flitted out of sight: and it was evident that he was quite ready to forego dinner, if we would only remain and admire, and ask questions, now and then supplementing a little historical fact unknown to him, and which he received as a sort of treasure-trove. "It is nothing! And it ill becomes the wife to intrude upon the *Herrenschaften*. I would rather be here with those who understand and appreciate the collection



THE OLD BRIDGE, BASLE.

than attend the finest banquet. My heart is here, and what little I know of learning and history is due to my interest in the museum. Our *pot-au-feu* can wait."

But we had compassion on his domestic goddess, who evidently verged on starvation and a nervous fever, gave our final look and last word—then turned to depart: but the keeper would scarcely unbar and unbolt until we had promised, in his own words, to honour him with a second visit. We were willing to pay him and his museum many a visit, but that would have to come into the promised May excursion, when the nightingales were singing and ghosts walked, and E. wrote her supernatural experiences.

Then we passed out to the sunshine and the blue skies, and the door was closed and locked behind us.

That afternoon the little town was holding high revelry. Everything was gay and excited. The streets were decorated with flags, the restless red and white colours standing out in vivid contrast with the serene blue of the skies. All the town was in evidence, the streets were crowded, heads looked out from every window, whilst bands of students made day hideous with songs, shouting and laughter. And all this fuss and furore was to greet the veterans who had fought in '66, and survived.

A long procession of ordinary, middle-aged men they looked as they paraded the town, with nothing of the fire-eater about them. Half a lifetime and a generation of domestic cares had quenched all the martial spirit they ever possessed, and whatever they might have done once they certainly did not now look ready to die for the fatherland. The sword had been put aside for ever in favour of the ploughshare. They had had their day of glory, and passed on their military ardour to a younger generation.

The banners and decorations, scarves and flowers accompanying the procession all looked simple and childish. It was impossible to imagine a band of Englishmen going through the same silly parade: but we are progressing that way. If we don't deck our veterans in ribbons and banners, we dress our Nelson's column with garlands and mottoes. One of these days Nelson will tumble down from his perch in sheer protest, and be gathered up again in fragments.

Then we took a comfortable-looking barouche with a driver dressed in his Sunday's best, waiting for hire in front of the solitary old house that has survived the pillage and destruction of the days gone by. He was a decent-looking man, and his sleepy, slow-moving horses looked as if on the whole they had a good time of it; but he declared that it was more than Sunday—it was a *fête* day—he must have double fare. This sounded like extortion and we protested, finally agreeing to a fare and a half, a concession to peace and quietness, for he was not entitled to a fraction beyond his ordinary rate.

Then he took us in leisurely fashion to many an old landmark in and around Heidelberg. There was not one remaining face and form of the days gone by, but the old house was still standing, though much altered, in which Herr Karl had first received us, and where in the "glow of early youth" we had spent days of happiness that could never return: golden days that, like an Indian summer, come to an end all too soon. And there was the old garden with its lamps that at night shone like pale moons amidst the trees.

This resuscitation of old memories has its "seamy side," and we were not altogether sorry when the ordeal was over and we found ourselves once more at our hotel on the heights.

That evening when the stars were out and something like repose had fallen upon the world, we went down to the forest walks sur-

rounding the old castle. The great gates were closed and as it was July, and the nightingales were not singing, and the ghosts were not walking, we did not trouble the gatekeeper to open to us. But the forest paths were accessible, and as we wandered about we seemed to see the shades of Frederick and Elizabeth flitting through the groves. We passed under the triumphal archway built for Elizabeth, and again imagined that little group as, on that long-past evening, they stood listening to the love-song of the romantic Trompeter: we heard



MARKET PLACE, BASLE.

Elizabeth's exclamation, Schomberg's angry reply, and Frederick's apology for the love-lorn swain: "What can I do to anyone for falling in love with the princess?" We saw them glide away, Elizabeth leaning on Schomberg's arm, Frederick and Christian following.

It must all have looked, that three centuries ago, very much as it looked to-night. The castle was in ruins, the English garden had disappeared; of the maze there was nothing left but a record; but

all this was not apparent under the stars. The air was very quiet and still; most people had gone back to the town; even the offending restaurant with its commonplace element was deserted; nothing disturbed the stillness but the far-off voices here and there of a band of singers, rising and falling in pleasant harmony. Some were students, some the veterans whose presence that day had placed Heidelberg *en fête*. The fire and elasticity of youth had departed, but they had kept their voices, and could give their part-songs with all their old vigour. Then even that died away, and gave place to unbroken silence.

It was only a stone's throw to the hotel, and we were soon standing on our balcony, looking out upon the sleeping world, the quiet flowing river that we could just trace in the darkness, and the sombre outlines and undulations of the surrounding heights. E. had retired; the day in spite of its intense interest, had been physically and mentally fatiguing; it was impossible to wander about this old ruin, with all its historical associations and stirring events, overshadowed as it was by the sad but romantic destinies of Frederick and Elizabeth, without a mental strain. So in solitude we sat upon the balcony thinking of the past years and of all that had gone into the irrevocable since we had looked upon the scene with Herr Karl and the nightingales. Memory was on the alert, and the events of those years seemed to pass before us day by day, a huge, overwhelming, bewildering phantasmagoria of incidents, a crowd of people: and as we most of us find in this world, sorrow and regret filled up a great portion of the canvas.

The next day, after another quiet visit to the Castle and the Terrace, and the Museum, after quietly walking about the deserted alleys under the trees, we said good-bye to Heidelberg. The omnibus took us down in solitary state to the station, and the train carried us into Rhineland and scenes that were still familiar, though not veiled by special memories of the past.

Onwards through the Duchy of Baden and parts of the Black Forest, and when the sun was declining and the shadows were lengthening, and the heat of the day was agreeably passing into the cool of the evening, the train steamed into the quaint historical old town of Basle, where the Rhine is broad, beautiful and swift-flowing, but has not perhaps the romance and picturesque glamour of Coblenz and Ehrenbreitstein.

Before leaving Kissingen Miss W. had strongly recommended the *Hôtel Euler*. "It does not overlook the Rhine or aspire to the grandeur of the *Trois Rois*," she observed; "but it is close to the railway station for Ragatz and the Engadine, for which you will have to take an early train; and, lastly, the people of the hotel are very civil."

Miss W. is an authority in all matters Swiss. She has done everything except climb mountains and cross glaciers, and this she would

no doubt attempt but that physicians have told her it would be at the risk of her life. She is still debating whether to ascend Mont Blanc and risk the consequences, or wait until a funicular railway makes the transit shamefully easy. Therefore anything that Miss W. advised in connection with Switzerland, had to be done: and we went to the Euler.

All happened as she foretold. Especially were its people civil and obliging, from the manager down to the luggage porter. The latter indeed was a little too much so, and we had to repress an idea that we had come to Switzerland for the sole purpose of making his personal acquaintance. In these days, one will go a long way and put up with a great deal, for the sake of civility and attention. The almost universal want of it abroad now makes travelling an annoyance instead of a pleasure.

The Hôtel Euler was an exception to the rule. On our return, some weeks later, having no early train to catch, and with a fancy for overlooking the Rhine, we chose the *Trois Rois*, and regretted the change. It was badly managed, the waiters seemed under no surveillance, did just as they pleased, and carried indifference to its extreme limit. It was a relief to get away; we hoped never again to trespass upon its inhospitality, and will dismiss it with the brief notice it deserves.

In the garden of the Hôtel Euler, we dined under the fragrant trees. It was somewhat late, and only two of the small tables were occupied. At one of them sat two girls taking a light evening meal, so quiet in movement and subdued in tone that we were quickly prepossessed in their favour—a rare experience. At first, from their youth—neither seemed much more than twenty—we thought them American, but soon discovered they were English; evidently travelling about in search of the picturesque, which abounds in Switzerland. We felt they were a mystery.

One was small, with a clear olive complexion, dark brown eyes, and a very quiet but animated way of talking to her companion, whom she evidently worshipped. Apparently she was made to be worshipped. She was taller and more commanding; her complexion was brilliant—and natural; her large blue eyes seemed to have taken a reflection from the clouds, and her hair was a rich golden. Yet she, too, was quiet and evidently had no wish to attract attention; a modesty for which both were conspicuous.

We never saw them again, and found they had left the next morning. Should these few words of description ever meet their eye, we beg them to explain the mystery: how two such girls—young, attractive, English—were travelling alone, even at the end of the nineteenth century, and managed to retain all the charm and freshness of a modest manner unmindful of the admiration they provoked.

The little group at the only other occupied table was of a

different description, consisting of two portly ladies who sat very upright and looked very stern, and a small gentleman, who in spite of the hot evening came in with a cloak over his shoulders. It was difficult to judge his age; he might be a young old man or an old young one. His face was sharp and pale, his form cadaverous. The ladies were evidently the terror of his life, and metaphorically sat upon him. If he opened his mouth to express an opinion, it was immediately contradicted; if presently he expressed opposite views—a propitiatory sacrifice, probably—still he was contradicted. Evidently he could do no right.

They were Swiss; French Swiss of the better class; in whom there is always a measure of homeliness. But they were evidently well to do, and were no doubt taking a little tour in their own country by way of distraction. Their evening meal was also of a light description, and when it was over, the little victim—for such he looked—threw his martial cloak around him and meekly followed the Amazonian ladies out of the garden. He appeared quite crushed, and as he passed rather near to us, threw us a look which said as plainly as look could speak: "Take warning by me!"

We discovered that one lady was his wife, the other the wife's sister. What chance had the poor man, if they made common cause against him? It was surprising, too, for ladies large and voluminous are generally amiable. It is your small women who are fierce and fiery and tyrannical, short and snappish and overbearing, and lead their spouses what is called a life.

In the hotel itself the most amusing figure was the fat old house-keeper, who attended to the rooms and directed a small staff of subordinates. She herself was a subordinate once, but that was many a year ago, and she had risen to the post of commander-in-chief by virtue of long service and honest dealing.

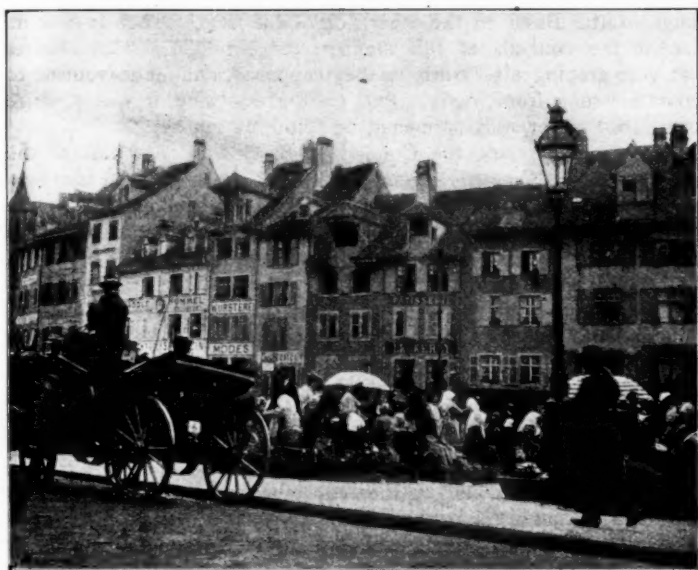
They had given us their best rooms, and her anxiety for our welfare was refreshing. She immediately took E. under her ample wing, and into her confidence, and her memory was stored with wonderful experiences, a few of which were so remarkable that it seemed as though a superstructure of the marvellous had been built around them by frequent telling. But the good old woman just fitted in with the influence of the place, which we found, even at the end of the nineteenth century, still interesting, still bearing very much the aspect of an old German town, and reminding one of the fact that it possesses a pedigree.

So far as is known, it began with a Roman fort built A.D. 374 by Valentinian. The Romans always knew where to pitch their tents and plant their fortresses, and had always some good reason for settling in any particular spot.

In the case of Basle there were several good reasons. The situation was beautiful and the surrounding country rich and fertile; Alsace on the one side and Baden on the other, though not then

known by those names, were promising tracts of land ; the chain of mountains we now call the Jura stretched their towering peaks and undulations across the Canton, some of the peaks rising 5,000 feet high. Here was pasturage for cattle, whenever it pleased the warlike Romans to turn their spears into pruning-hooks. They also recognised that it would be a good wine-producing country, and the Romans loved good wine.

Then there was the broad flowing river : and they recognised the truth to which we have heard Gustavus Adolphus give expression when many a century had rolled away, that rivers were the great ducts and arteries in the system of the world : and here was one of



MARKET PLACE, BASLE.

the finest of them all, broad, beautiful and swift-flowing, its waters a pure, clear green, as they are to-day. It was also the only stream in the neighbourhood of any consequence.

But the Romans were not to have possession of it for ever ; were not to found a kingdom here and perpetuate their race. Their city of Augusta Rauracorum was destroyed in the next century, and the village of Augst now occupies the site. Now and then a "Roman remain" is turned up by a spade, or suddenly appears as though from the clouds ; otherwise there is nothing to show that a Roman city once flourished there. The Alamanni destroyed the city, and then the papal power asserted itself, and the Bishop planted his

palace close to the old fortress—what could be better for a church militant?

A town speedily sprang up round the palace; everything flourished. Charlemagne ranked its bishops amongst his nobles, and they were Princes of the Holy Roman Empire; in time the town became a Free Imperial City, grew rich and important.

As the years rolled on it had its chances and trials. There is no perpetual peace in this world any more than perpetual motion. Earthquakes and pestilences, petty strifes and more serious warfare came to them. The most disastrous earthquake was in 1356, but for which Basle might to-day be more interesting than it is.

In spite of all drawbacks, it flourished. In 1392, the bishop bought Little Basle on the other side of the river. Then it took its place in the councils of the country: those religious controversies that were groping after truth, as they supposed, and endeavouring to separate wrong from right. But on the one side it was a mere struggle for power and supremacy, and nothing more.

Then in 1431 came the Council of Basle, third and last of the great reforming Councils—Pisa, Constance, Basle—whose aim was to reform the Church by destroying the absolute supremacy of the Pope: and we know how, in that wonderful sixteenth century, with the aid of such men as Martin Luther, John Huss and Jerome of Prague, the great Reformation was brought about.

All that Basle accomplished was to undo the work of Pisa and the fathers of Constance. And yet it did more: it proved that the Romish influence was supreme, and that there could be no Reformation without absolutely destroying the papal power: there could be no compromise and no half measures.

The way was paved for the Reformation, but nearly a century was to elapse before it became an accomplished fact.

The interval was taken up with constant struggles: popes against councils and councils against popes.

In 1437, Eugenius was pope, and the council ordered him to appear before them at Basle. He replied by dissolving the council, and the council pronounced the king contumacious for disobeying them, the Emperor and the King of France giving them their support. Thereupon Eugenius summoned the Council of Florence in opposition, and the bishops deposed him. The council, they contended, was above the pope. The latter issued a bull excommunicating the bishops, upon which they elected a new pope, Amadeus, Duke of Savoy, who assumed the power as Felix V. The church sided with Eugenius, the universities with Felix and the Council of Basle. The council continued to make laws and issue decrees, opposed by Eugenius.

The determination of the latter had nearly succeeded; Emperor, Antipope and Council of Basle were about to yield; when he died in 1447, and Nicholas V. was elected pope: a learned and enlightened

man who successfully attempted conciliation. In less than two years he had won over the Emperor, the Duke of Savoy abdicated the papal chair which he had never filled with heart and soul, and the Council of Basel dissolved itself.

Nicholas was wise. As the son of a physician of Sarzana, he had been brought up with large and liberal views. His mind should not fall into the narrow groove of religious controversy and papal tyranny, which only led to bitter warfare and created enemies, and he determined that his reign should be one of peace; there had been more than enough of schism. So he encouraged the fine arts; improved Rome by repairing the fortifications, began to rebuild the Cathedral, enlarged the thoroughfares, and traced out the plans of restoration afterwards adopted. He did much to revive learning; multiplied MSS., had many translations made from the Greek to the Latin; gathered about him all the great scholars of the time. He made the papal chair once more popular and flourishing, and only towards the end, on the discovery of a plot to turn Rome into a Republic and seize pope and cardinals, did he in his fear relax his principles of mild ruling. For the first and only time, his angry terror caused him to be cruel and severe.

Then came a second blow in that same year of 1453, in the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, in spite of the pope's galleys sent to the rescue. The misfortune fell heavily upon Nicholas, who felt how much it took from the glory of his reign. Two years afterwards he died, and was succeeded by Calixtus III. old, weak, and feeble-minded.

Then the years rolled onwards, bringing strife and unrest with them, until in the next century great men arose, and Luther carried his Reformation.

Basel, as it was then written, had gone through many troubles. In 1348 the Black Death decimated its population. In 1356 came the earthquake, and such houses as were left standing were destroyed by fire. The ruin was complete, and it was proposed to choose a fresh site for the new city—for its people had no idea of not springing up again into life. From 1431 to about 1445 the Council of Basel sat, as we have just seen, and made its laws and defied the popes—until Nicholas arose and healed the breach. In 1444 came the battle of St. Jacob, followed by the plague which carried off as many victims as the Black Death had claimed just a hundred years earlier. So one thing followed on the heels of another. In 1501 it became a member of the Swiss Confederacy, and from that time was actively identified with the Reformation. The Bishop removed to Porrentruy—capital of the Bernese Jura—in 1525, and remained there until 1792, changing again in 1828 to Soleure. Pope Pius II. founded the university in 1460, and also left behind him a written description of the New Basel that sprang up after the earthquake of 1356.

Basel suffered much in the Thirty Years' War. Yet such was its vitality that, in spite of all adverse influences, the town prospered, until the inhabitants of the rural districts rose in serious rebellion against the Government that had usurped all political rights and left them unrepresented.

Peace was finally restored in 1833, and it now has every appearance of a rich and flourishing town, possesses large manufactories, chiefly of ribbon, and gives employment to an immense number of people. Its streets have a good deal of life and bustle in them; the inhabitants look cheerful, contented and well-to-do. The suburbs are rapidly growing, and houses pretending to style and luxury are springing up around.

Over and above its industries, a perfect network of railways brings an immense number of visitors within its gates—metaphorically speaking, for the old walls have long since disappeared. This is another and great source of wealth to the city, and as we have seen, the *Hotel des Trois Rois* has waxed rich and rude.

But the old bridge is still very interesting, though two hideous modern bridges—the Upper and Lower, placed aggressively one on either side—have done their best to take from the picturesque effect of the river and the town rising upon its banks.

The famous old bridge is 800 feet long and dates back to the thirteenth century: though how much of the early work remains is questionable. Beneath it flows the rapid and romantic stream, its waters a clear and beautiful green, just as they were in the days when Valentinian seeing the spot loved it, built there his Roman fortress, and called it *Basilia*—whence the present name.

Here, on the old bridge, one lingers long, lost in dreams of the past, the long array of incidents that have given Basel its place in history. Then winding up the quiet street at the foot of the bridge, and passing the museum and the university, we presently reach the cathedral which lies 900 feet above the river. It is at once interesting and disappointing, as one would expect an ecclesiastical building in Switzerland or Germany to be: a mixture of the Romanesque and Pointed. The colour of the deep red sandstone is good, but the sharp outlines give it a comparatively modern air, and all the charm of antiquity is absent. Yet the cathedral was begun in 1010 by the Emperor Henry II., though perhaps nothing remains of that date. The oldest portion goes back possibly to about the year 1300. Then, having suffered in the great earthquake it was almost rebuilt about the year 1375.

The west front is somewhat remarkable for its grotesque carving, and equestrian statues of St. George and St. Martin, the former riding full tilt at the dragon. The north porch is Romanesque and dates from the twelfth century, and its carvings represent our Saviour coming to Judgment, the Evangelists, John the Baptist, and a bas-relief of the Ten Virgins, rudely but quaintly executed.

The cloisters on the south side are quite the most interesting part of the cathedral, dating back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and a small part to the twelfth century. Here you really feel in a sort of old-world atmosphere, with vistas of beautiful pointed arches interlacing each other. These cloisters form a succession of quadrangles, and stretch away to the river, which they overlook, and where they are beautifully overshadowed by trees : a quiet retreat in which one feels very much at peace, and very out of the world.

Here, it is said, Erasmus was wont to come when he had given up the idea of settling in England and had been attracted to Basel by the reputation of its press. He had had a life of much moving



OLD HOUSES, BASEL.

about, of feverish excitement, of years of fighting with poverty, yet rising superior to all, and ever adding to his reputation. In his earlier years when visiting England, he had been the friend of Warham and Thomas More, and the few men who were distinguished for their learning, such as Latimer, Colet and Sixtinus. All appreciated him, and saw in him the future of great things, their equal if not their superior.

On his first visit to England he went to Oxford, living in a room in "St. Mary's College," an Augustinian house in New-Inn-Hall St. ; on his second visit he went to Cambridge. His third visit saw him the guest of Thomas More, from whose house he again went to

Cambridge at the instigation of Bishop Fisher of Rochester, then president of Queen's College, through whom he was appointed Lady Margaret professor of divinity and regius reader of Greek.

But all that was of the past when he finally settled at Basel, and caused Froben's Press to be regarded as the most important in the world. His days of poverty and struggle were over; presents came to him from all parts of the world and from all sorts and conditions of men—and women. Even Cromwell sent him 20 angels, and the nuns of Cologne made him special sweetmeats. All Europe would have him dwelling amongst them, and kings, from the Pope Clement downwards, bribed him to take up his abode under their especial protection.

But the gentle, learned and refined Erasmus was not to be bribed. He had worked for his independence and loved it, and for no bribe, honour or glory would he part with it. His health was always extremely delicate, yet his mental and physical energy was phenomenal. Those later years, in spite of declining health, were the happiest of his life: especially the interregnum of six years spent at Freiburg after the death of Froben in 1527, when Basel was separated from the Empire and religious controversies took the place of learning: controversies and disputes into which the large-minded Erasmus would not enter—though one would like to feel that his sympathies were on the side of the Reformers.

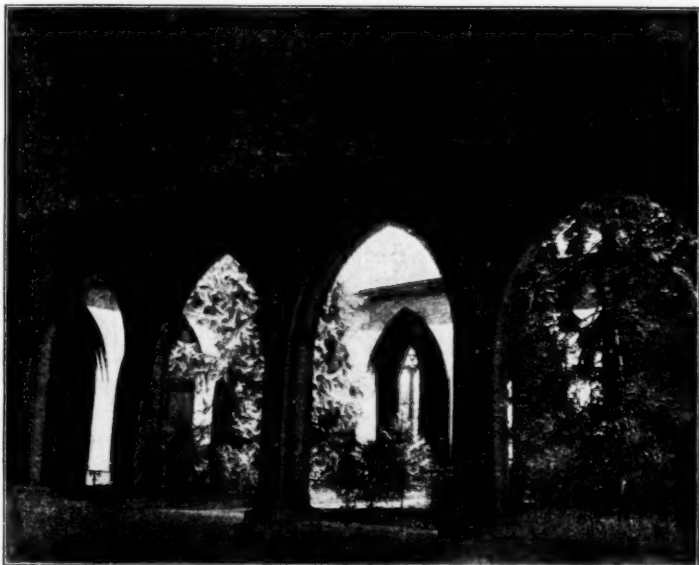
But all his life he was too much governed by reason, and only in this would one like to change his character. In himself he was gentle, courteous, charming, and his life was guided by the highest human principles. His delicate health and extreme sensitiveness made him thin-skinned, and to this naturally followed sarcasm and quarrels. The end came for him in 1536, the end of a wonderful life.

He was much given to haunting the cloisters in those later years; would pace quadrangles and halls; and perhaps raising his eyes to the blue skies framed in by the pointed arches, would wonder what lay beyond them, and whether reason was after all man's best guide.

Day after day his graceful but not tall figure might be seen pacing to and fro in deep contemplation. His favourite seat was under the trees overshadowing the cloisters and overlooking the river. Here his pale face, with its clear blue eyes and yellow hair, might be observed, lost in thought; composing a dedication, or doing some editorial work, or hastily putting together a reply to some personal assault; or, it might be, writing one of his numerous books or pamphlets. On his pale expressive face, there was more frequently than not a look of suffering, for as he advanced in years his delicacy increased and he had to bear much pain. All his life he felt the effects of the starvation he had undergone in his enforced and unwilling novitiate in the convent of the canons of St. Augustine, near Gouda: and where perhaps his religious sentiments were

weakened by a distaste for his occupation and the horror he felt for the coarse and ignorant monks who were his associates. The last years of his life were years of great bodily discomfort, but his mental energy and power never failed him to the end.

On that seat overshadowed by the trees and overlooking the river, whose majesty appealed so strongly to his own elevated senses, he would gather about him the citizens of Basel, who stood first in the lists of learning and recognised him as their master and one infinitely above them. Here came Hans Holbein, who loved to paint his features as they have been handed down to posterity: great in art as Erasmus in learning.



CLOISTERS, BASLE.

No wonder they loved this quiet nook with the cloister behind and the swift-flowing river before them. The view with the Black Forest hills in the background was charming, and charming it remains to this day.

Erasmus was buried in the cathedral, and there his monument may be seen, but where his body lies is doubtful.

The interior was well restored half a century ago, but looks very new. In the choir the Council of Basel held its public meetings; but those weightier meetings dating from 1431 to 1446 were held in the adjoining Chapter-house, a low, interesting Gothic room that remains almost as it was in those days. It now forms a part of the

Mediæval Museum and contains fragments of the fresco of the Dance of Death painted on the walls of the Dominican Church in 1409, in remembrance of the plague—fragments of extreme interest.

The little woman in charge of the church was in a very unamiable frame of mind, and answered questions in the shortest possible manner. Something had evidently gone wrong with her; a domestic difference perhaps, in which she had been vanquished; or a curtain lecture which had disturbed her night's rest. She would give us no information, and scorned to open locked doors with a silver key. We soon left her to her own reflections, and passing into the cloisters, met a bridal party on their way to the church: the funniest wedding party ever seen.

A young bridegroom of some two or three and twenty summers, who looked shy and uncomfortable, and a bride of more than twice as many winters, who did not look exultant and masterful and designing, but who held his arm and walked as though she were being taken to her funeral. Her face was pale and thin and her eyes were red. They were respectable but humble folk. What was the mystery, we wondered. Why were this evidently unhappy and ill-assorted pair about to plunge into hopeless misery? What earthly consideration compelled them? Not love, certainly.

Closely following, driving them as it were, as a shepherd would drive a couple of sheep to the slaughter, came an elderly couple, walking with determined step and expression. Here perhaps was the compelling force; but whether they were his parents or hers, it was difficult to say: from the bride's age they probably belonged to the bridegroom.

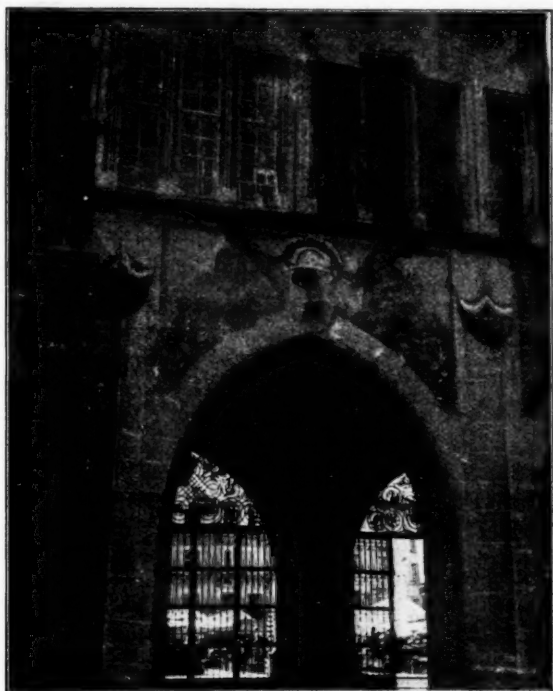
Two or three younger couples followed and closed this singular and mysterious procession. They disappeared through the south doorway and we saw them no more. But we wondered whether it was this that had upset the little sextoness in the church: whether, as a friend of the "contracting parties," she knew that the contract could never bring happiness to either, and in her sympathy and righteous anger resented the sacrifice. It was quite possible, and under the circumstances we excused her want of amiability. One likes to feel that moroseness is due to secondary causes, and is not an organic disease.

We went our way. It was market day, and the market-place was lively and crowded. Here stood the Rathhaus, with its painted exterior and frieze decorated with the shields of the original cantons: a late Gothic building of the sixteenth century, sufficiently characteristic with its painting and Gothic outlines, its slanting roof and open ironwork turret to throw a distinct and refining influence over the scene.

Under its shadow the women spread their stalls and sit under huge umbrellas, patiently waiting until the Rathhaus clock strikes the hour for the dissolution of their domestic parliament. In the

air there is a sound of unrest, of a babel of tongues rising from all parts of the market-place; laughter and chattering, hard bargains, and the spoils everywhere disappearing in triumph.

There are many interesting bits about the town, many an assemblage of quaint old roofs, many an old-world outline. The interior of the Post-Office is curious and ancient; so are the halls of the ancient guilds, which remain almost in their original state: such as the Smiths' Hall, and the Schlüssel Zunfte in the broad Freie Strasse



CLOISTERS, BASLE.

close to the market-place. The Mediæval Museum is the finest in Switzerland, and the Picture Gallery has a collection of paintings and drawings by the younger Holbein, besides many other treasures of art, which well repay a visit.

Basle is also interesting for a longer sojourn. The neighbourhood yields many excursions, and there is fairly good trout fishing to be had. The splendid view from the St. Margarethen gives one a very good idea of the situation of Basle and its surrounding charms. Nothing can be more romantic than the Val de Moutier, up which

the railway passes on its way to Berne. The rocky defiles through which the train winds its way, the broad stretches of green meadows with their occasional villages, the mountain heights covered with dense forests, the sunshine and blue sky over all, make this Valley of the Birs one of the most delightful spots in Switzerland. Still better than going by rail which hurries relentlessly where one would linger, is to drive quietly and leisurely through the Valley.

But the great beauty of Basle itself is its splendid river, for ever hurrying on its way to the sea, with strong force and tide. Standing on the old bridge you notice the beauty of its waters; how clear and green, and in what volume they rush onwards. Out of it rise the quaint old houses, which seem to belong to the Mediaeval days, and their reflections are multiplied in ripples and eddies of the rapid stream. On the right of the old bridge rises the new and white and aggressive structure of the *Trois Rois* which leaves so much to be desired; but it is impossible not to have new outlines intruding upon the old, go where one may; we still have a little left for which to be thankful; but when the twentieth century is expiring as the nineteenth is now doing, and we have all gone over to the shades of the world unseen, there will be little or nothing left of those wonderful buildings and matchless outlines, by which we still know that once upon a time there were giants in the land.



OTTERBURNE'S HEIR.

BY CAPTAIN A. DE L. KIRKPATRICK.

PROLOGUE.

MY uncle, the Duke of Otterburne, has asked me to write down what I know about a certain weird experience we both—he and I, his nephew—have had.

Now in an account of this kind, one must relate, as simply as possible, events as they really happened, avoiding all exaggeration. Therefore, we have both gone over with the minutest care each incident in this plain narrative concerning Princess Olga Zouroff.

I may mention that both my uncle and I agree in believing Princess Zouroff and Zoraide were one and the same woman. That she may have had other names in other ages, is possible, and is a question open to doubt. But with regard to the rest, I have never been able to find anyone who could unravel the mystery of her career.

PART I.

SHORTLY after I joined the "Royal Rangers" I was staying at Hurst Castle with the Duke of Otterburne. It is a charming old house, full of curios and *objets d'art*.

One wet afternoon, he and I wandered through the picture gallery, hung with the portraits of dead-and-gone ancestors, powdered, wigged and ruffled. He had something to tell me about each of them, for his hobby is genealogy.

"You, my nephew, must become acquainted with our family traditions. As my heir, it is necessary that all should be known to you concerning us."

And he sighed as he thought of his son—slain in Southern Africa by the Zulus shortly after the sad death of the Prince Imperial. Ah me! death comes alike to all—the palace and the humblest hovel.

"Now this one," he said, "is a good likeness, I believe, of the third Earl of Otterburne, who was beheaded. His grandson received our dukedom from Charles II. for our unswerving loyalty to his father, the martyred king—one of Charles's few acts of gratitude."

"And who was this dark, stern-looking man?" I asked, as I paused before a very ancient picture.

"That is the first Earl of Otterburne, Queen Elizabeth's friend in her old age," he replied. "He asked the celebrated Dr. Dee to

foretell the family fortune," laughed my uncle, "and part of Dr. Dee's prophecy is written on the frame, so that those who run may read."

And this is what I read :

"When Otterburne's lady shall seek for to slay
The heir still unborn in some far distant day,
Death's pale horse that prances so swift in her wake,
And deals death to others, shall her overtake."

"I cannot say much for the composition," said my old uncle. "The good doctor's gifts evidently did not include poetry ;"—then added, with a smile : "I hope your wife won't want to slay you either before or after you have stepped into my shoes."

Finally we paused before a painting, the likeness of a tall, darkly-beautiful woman, with glorious brown eyes, her hair simply gathered into a crown on her shapely head, her dress, soft flowing white silk. Somehow, those eyes fascinated me. Even as I looked at them, the expression of that lovely face changed, or seemed to change ; lines of cruelty appeared round that smiling mouth ; a fierce, relentless lust shone in her eyes. Then it was gone ; some trick, it was, of the painter's art. Perhaps he had seen her soul looking at him, face to face as he sat limning her beauty in the vanished days of the long ago. It was the gem of the whole collection. To my silent query my uncle answered :

"It is our ancestress, Dona Inez de Cortez, wife to the fourth Earl, who died in 1672. Strange stories are told with legendary traditions about her sorceries and witchcrafts. Some say she sold her soul to the devil for the secret of eternal youth, and it is certain that she lived here for years after the death of her husband. That very picture was painted when she was sixty-six years of age."

Now the portrait represented a woman of not more than twenty-five summers at the most.

"To be sure," I laughed, "painters flattered then just as much as nowadays."

But my uncle shook his head and replied :

"I don't believe there was any flattery in her case. History has it that she lived here in great retirement until it was finished, only appearing on rare occasions. People feared her on account of her wonderful beauty, which, though the years passed by, never altered. A dark story is attached to the artist's death. When he had finished his work, he was found dying in his studio here one morning, no signs of wound or hurt on him ; but with his last breath he managed to gasp out some scathing denunciation against the Countess Inez Otterburne. After he was buried she went to Spain and never returned ; that was in 1701. Some old family jewels and plate were missing ; but those she could not have taken, for she was immensely wealthy ; indeed, she it was who built all this gallery with the west

wing. Her son was fifth Earl and first Duke of Otterburne ; she had no other children.

"Now the curious part of the story is that his son went to Spain in 1746, summoned there by a message purporting to be from his grandmother, Doña Inez, who would then have been about one hundred and nine years old. He returned from his voyage to Granada with a marvellous tale of a Senorita, who had fairly bewitched him. She could not have been more than twenty-six, yet she affirmed she was his grandmother, and told him several facts that could only have been known to either the head of the house or the heir. She even described the interior of our secret chamber which, as you are aware, is only known to myself and my wife. In all respects she was the image of the portrait here. However, she gave Lord Glenmoyle a large sum of money for the good of the estate ; after that, the intimacy dropped by her desire.

"My grandfather," continued my uncle, "late in the last century, received a large sum—supposed to come from her—so I think she must have left trustees to pay moneys at intervals to the heirs. Now it's a queer thing, but in 1882, at the Opera House in Paris, I saw in a box opposite mine the exact counterpart of this picture, a lovely young woman, with a sad, cruel face. I had the curiosity to make inquiries, and learnt she was the Princess Olga Zouroff, a Russian ; but no one seemed to know much about her. She was enormously wealthy, and had a suite of apartments in the Hotel Continental."

"Well, your legend of Doña Inez's everlasting youth and beauty seems to be fairly well carried out. if she's going about still," I laughed. "Why, at any rate, your Princess must be about two hundred and sixty years old at least."

"I don't know," replied my uncle, "yet perhaps there are some foundations for the mediæval myths of the Wandering Jew and Salome, the daughter of Herodias."

At that moment a footman approached with a card on a salver, which he gave to the Duke.

"How extraordinary !" he exclaimed, turning to me as he looked at the card, "the very woman we were talking of—Princess Zouroff ! What does she want with me ?"

However, we both went down to the *salon*, where the Duchess was already apparently charmed with her visitor. Well, when first I saw her, I received quite a shock, and so did Otterburne, for Princess Zouroff was the exact presentment of the dead Inez. But Otterburne had seen her twelve years ago in Paris. Madame Zouroff now looked hardly more than a girl ; time certainly had stood still with her. Later on, as she told us she was a member of the De Cortez family, we at once claimed her as a relative.

"I believe I am," she simply said. "It is that that brought me here to-day ; that and my wish to see a picture of your ancestress and to test a secret I discovered in some old family papers."

"And the secret is?" queried the Duchess.

"Ah—wait and hope," she gaily answered.

After tea, we all went to the picture-gallery. Now, when talking the matter over afterwards, we agreed it was a strange thing that *she knew the way there*. Without hesitation, she walked on through the long corridors of the big house. Only once was she at fault, and that was in the "new" gallery, called "new" because it was built seventy years ago. At last she stood in front of the picture. There was certainly a wonderful likeness—the same haunting eyes and exquisite colouring; and even as I looked, I noted the painter's pre-Raphaelite art had painted a little brown mole at the corner of her mouth. There it was to be seen reproduced on her descendant, two hundred and fifty years afterwards. For a while she remained gazing at the beauty of a past age; then, slightly shivering, she turned as if to go.

I ventured to remind her of the secret she had spoken of.

"Ah, yes," she answered, "it is beside the picture."

Going up to the oak panelling, she felt amongst the carvings. Suddenly, a little press door swung open, disclosing shelves on which were piled some very antique tankards—evidently gold—and three large golden salvers. But this was not all, for putting her hand into the recess she drew out a small casket of rusty ironwork. Raising the lid, she showed us a marvellous necklace of emeralds, which were plainly of great value.

"After all," she said, "I am right; the papers of Doña Inez were true."

We were all amazed looking at the treasure. It was wonderful how the secret of the cabinet had been so long kept.

Then Madame Zouroff, with an airy grace all her own, clasped the priceless emeralds round my aunt's neck, saying:

"They were your ancestress's. I restore them."

I looked at the plate. It was very old chased gold—perhaps the spoils of some monastery ransacked in the days of Henry VIII.

We all begged her to pay us a visit at Hurst. She accepted the invitation with pleasure, and a few days later arrived from London. At first she fascinated us all. She had travelled much, and was marvellously well informed on every subject. Ancient history was to her as an open book. She seemed to know all about the latest scientific discoveries, and had evidently studied deeply.

Yet for so young and beautiful a woman a strange vein of cynicism ran through all her learning. Sometimes I could note a hard tightening of that exquisitely-formed face, a fierce relentless look clouding her dark eyes. Her two servants, Italians—her maid and courier—were evidently devoted to her. They had been with her for years, she said.

She had been with us about ten days when Dick Haldane, an

Eton boy, arrived—Otterburne's cousin. She professed herself greatly charmed with him, but he appeared rather to dislike her.

One evening she was quite ill—one of her nervous attacks, she declared—and retired early to her room. We all remarked how very ill she looked—the Duchess was greatly concerned—and we all said that she appeared at least fifteen years older than usual.

That night I was roused by an awful clamour in Dick's room, next to mine. His yells for "help" brought me to him with a light. The poor boy was sitting up in bed white with fright. "Take her away," he panted. I showed him that no one was there; it was only a nightmare; but he persisted that a large black thing—like the Princess—had come to him in the darkness, and he had felt her hands round his throat choking him.

After a bit I quieted him, and he came into my room for the rest of the night. Next morning, at breakfast, we all chaffed him about his nightmare. He was only fifteen, and was very cut up about it.

Madame Zouroff was still prostrated, her maid said, and would see no one, so she did not hear the tale of Dick's dream.

Next morning, the valet asked me to come to Haldane's room—something was wrong with him, he thought—as he couldn't get him to rouse himself. I looked, and to my horror saw the boy was almost dead—pale, and very weak. He could barely speak. "She did come," he moaned; "I couldn't shout for you. She bit me here." To be sure, on his neck there was a very small puncture, and a little blood on his night-shirt.

Now I fancied he might have walked in his sleep and hurt himself, but none of us could assign any reason for his weakness; it seemed as if all his vitality had been drained out of him. Nothing but the most careful nursing and nourishment brought him round.

Next day the Princess was greatly shocked at her favourite's illness. She was quite well, and asked to see him, but nothing would persuade Dick to let her into his room; indeed, the footman slept in it, he was so nervous.

A few days after she left us, *en route* for Spain. Perhaps we all felt a little relieved when she had gone. With all her charm of manner and *bonne camaraderie*, there was something uncanny about her cleverness and wonderful beauty.

She was certainly unlucky, for one of those horrible and mysterious railway murders was committed in the very train she travelled in to London. The victim, a girl about seventeen, was found dead in a second-class railway-carriage, no signs of any struggle, but a slight puncture in the neck, from which it was proved, at the coroner's inquest, her life-blood must have been drained. The whole thing was a mystery, and was never cleared up.

Then my leave was up, and I rejoined my regiment quartered at Aldershot.

PART II.

TEN years later, we of the Rangers were in stirring times. The hill-tribes in the north-west Indian frontier had taken the offensive, and we, with several other regiments, English and native, were sent up to quell them.

We were quartered at Sangina, a village on the hills near the Kurram Valley, and had a wonderful view of the country from the camp. Far in the distance was the Khyber Pass—"Russia's road to India." Here and there native forts dotted the peaks of the hills; it was a lonely, wild place. We had constant skirmishes with the Afridis—fierce chaps who cared nothing for death. But our men went for them once or twice with the bayonet, and they became more cautious. Yet we had to "mark time" for a concentration of troops on the frontiers. The warlike Afghans were reported to be arming; hints of growing disaffection to British rule were rife: the insurrection was serious. It was the cloud like a man's hand rising out of the sea. But, at the time I write, all we could do was to keep the tribes in check. If we suffered any reverse, it might well be that a general rising of the followers of Mahomet might ensue.

Two miles off on our right flank stood a fortress, Ali Masjid, on a rocky cliff; vague reports reached us of a lovely woman living there in royal magnificence.

The natives round mentioned her name with awe and terror. An old fakir whom I had saved from a blood-thirsty Afridi, swore she was "accursed, a she-devil, a murderess." Now as it isn't pleasant to have your next-door neighbour called by these names, I asked him for more information which, like all gossips, he gave most willingly.

He related to me at great length, that the chieftainess, or Begum, who lived there, and indeed ruled all that district, was "Shaitan," for she had been there even in his great-grandfather's days. Sometimes she went away, he knew not whither, for many moons, and then returned, and always young and beautiful as of old. "They say," the old man whispered to me, "she is nourished on the blood of young men and maidens, and so keeps young as they were. And again they say," he babbled on, "she has given herself to evil—all for everlasting beauty. She has victims when she wills it, no man can withstand her."

The old fellow was too good; his story smacked of some mediæval legend—a feminine Faust—and Mephistopheles.

That night there was an alarm. Our enemies were in great force, and our search-lights made them out attacking the citadel of Ali Masjid. We all turned out, for we could not make out their tactics; but my friendly fakir told us they always were fighting against this "friend of Shaitan's," yet she was always victorious. Along the steep hill-side we could hear the sharp reports of rifles. Flashes lit

up the darkness, then from Ali Masjid we could hear the rattle of Maxims, as a dense throng of natives surged up the winding path leading to the gateway.

"Must be pretty well civilized if they have Maxims there," said the Colonel. Then the early dawn showed us the attacking force in full retreat.

During the day General Weldon sent me with two other officers of ours, Maitland and young Dick Haldane, who had joined us, on an embassy.

Clearly, the chief of the fortress must be friendly to us, since he so stubbornly repulsed our foes. The fort was quite three miles off, and as we trotted along with our escort, we kept a sharp look-out for any possible ambush. We were all in great spirits; it was a bit of a spree; Haldane quoted the 'Arabian Nights,' and raved about fair princesses and Aladdin and his lamp.

Drawing near the castle, which was strongly fortified, I rode forward waving my flag of truce; we could see the defenders, big swarthy fellows, watching us from the ramparts. Then the commander appeared—a fine-looking man in a kind of kharki uniform. In my choicest Hindostanee I requested an audience, to arrange terms of an alliance. After some delay, we rode in, some fifty of us, and formed up on one side of the courtyard, the chief welcoming us with grave courtesy.

"The Queen would receive us now."

Leaving Maitland in charge, Haldane and I, with a dozen of our men, entered the Hall of Audience. I expected to see some dusky Begum with gorgeous surroundings; but no, the great Hall was simple in its mediæval grandeur; great columns of grey marble stone flooring, the walls covered with arms and trophies of the chase, and here and there dark Indian draperies looped up with cords.

But at the end rose a great dais, and on it a throne, the only brilliant spot of colouring in the apartment, barbaric in its magnificence, all gold and ivory, set with flashing gems of every hue. About fifty armed men were drawn up as guards round it. When we halted the Queen came out from an inner room, and as she ascended the throne, her escort shouted, brandishing their swords, "Queen, live for ever!"

She was tall and slight, very girlish-looking in figure, her face concealed with a long white veil. Turning to us, she spoke, bidding us welcome, and I replied, reading General Weldon's letter soliciting her alliance.

She replied that she needed no help or allies; with her brave warriors she could hold her own; still she would be our friend. Her voice was low and sweet, and she spoke Hindostanee very purely; but some long forgotten chord vibrated in my memory. Where had I heard those deep thrilling tones before?

She bade us farewell, and withdrew. Through her shroud-like veil

I could see her dark eyes watching us intently. Could she really be the sorceress the fakir had spoken of, this young girl?

As we rode back to camp, Dick was silent; at last he burst out with: "I know who she reminded me of; that beastly Princess Zouroff! I never could stand her! She was like a snake."

Then the missing link to my memory was supplied. It was her voice, forgotten for years, that spoke. No doubt the lady was a spy in Russian pay, and should be guarded against. I told my suspicions to the Colonel; Haldane, too, wished us to have nothing, "good, bad, or indifferent, to do with her."

However, next day the treaty was signed between us and Princess Zoraide, as she styled herself.

The tribesmen were quiet after their defeat; we had nothing to do but keep a sharp look-out. Princess Zoraide sent presents of fresh meat and fruits to the camp daily.

Then one of the men in my company was missing, Private O'Reilly, a smart young soldier, who had been on "sentry go" on the outskirts of the camp. He had been visited by the officer on duty at one o'clock at night; half an hour afterwards he had disappeared, leaving no traces behind him. No reason could be given for his desertion.

The following week Private Hands disappeared, and two other men from the Scarlet Hussars in exactly the same way; and in three weeks no less than ten men were "absent without leave," deserting their posts. There were never any signs of a struggle, and they could have easily given the alarm. All precautions were in vain; men still "deserted," leaving no clue to their whereabouts.

I was on duty one night, and going on "visiting rounds" about twelve o'clock; all was well. I had only one more sentry to inspect. I don't know why I did it, but I went stealthily, stealing along almost beside the sergeant. I could see the sentry's figure in the clear moonlight; we were hidden in the shadow of a big rock; he was pacing up and down on his beat; then he stopped and grounded arms. We were about a hundred yards away, but the white light of the moonshine showed us a shadowy figure flitting along towards him, tall, black, and—I shudder as I write it—bat-like, with outspread draperies like wings. He stood still watching the approaching form; Sergeant Gibbons and I paused. Was this treachery? He did not challenge! surely it looked like it. Lance-Corporal Commins, we thought, was a steady man, incapable of treachery. Whatever it was drew nearer. He challenged "Who goes there?" in a weak and hesitating voice; then to our amazement he at first walked slowly, then ran swiftly towards the figure, which turned and fled as he followed it.

We shouted and bolted after them, and fired to alarm the camp. The thought of Russian spies flashed through my mind. Rapidly we caught up on the flying figures. Sergeant Gibbons collared Commins, and in a moment he was his prisoner. I ran on after the other.

Still the shadowy form kept ahead of me. My breath was coming in great gasps—I could run no longer. Yet one effort more—surely I could catch it, yet! Then my foot caught in a stone; I stumbled and fell with a crash on my head.

Coming to consciousness, I felt someone was bending over me. Half dazed, I could see dark eyes looking into mine, and feel tresses of long hair on my brows, soft arms round my neck raising my aching head. Then I slipped back into dreamland once more; back again to Hurst Castle, talking to Princess Zouroff, and looking at the lovely Doña Inez, the sorceress. Horrors! a sharp pang runs through me! I am choking! stifling! an overpowering weakness is dragging me down to the gates of death.

It is Princess Zouroff who is bending over me. As my life ebbs away I see her, her eyes glowing with a hellish glare, her red lips twitching madly. But I do not fear; are not her arms round my neck, my head pillowed on her bosom? I gaze at the cold stars lighting up heaven's dark vault—I will sleep—sleep for ever! Yet no—I am young—one more struggle against this overpowering weakness—one struggle for dear life and the golden sunlight. What is it that trickles from my neck? It is red—it covers me!

The fiend has gone—a shot—a shout! friends are with me—Gibbons raises me—there's Haldane.

"Is she gone?" I gasp—then comes thick darkness.

THE NARRATIVE OF LIEUTENANT RICHARD HALDANE.

EVEN as a small boy I had an antipathy to that woman, Princess Zouroff.

She *did* come into my room and try to take my life that night long ago at Hurst Castle. They all said it was nightmare I had, but it wasn't—recent events prove that. Musgrave has come to the same horrible conclusion, and has described the mysterious disappearance of many of our poor fellows at the camp at Ali Masjid. It was very plucky of him to pursue that flying devil—how he did not catch her I don't know, for he is the best sprinter in the Service.

I remember that night well. There was an alarm, the bugles sounded, the camp was out in a moment; a picked body of men from the Royal Rangers and the Scarlet Hussars ran out to where we heard shots fired; shouts led us to where Sergeant Gibbons had just taken prisoner a sentry, whom he found deserting. In great excitement he told us to follow up Musgrave, who had run on in pursuit of some spy, who had taken the path towards Ali Masjid. About twenty of us hurried on, the remainder halting.

It was a clear, moonlight night as we doubled along the track. Far ahead I saw a dark, crouching form on the edge of the pathway. On we rushed. Suddenly it rose and fled, shadowy and uncanny—

looking, towards the castle. We came up to where we had just seen it, and found Musgrave, poor fellow, lying there nearly dead, bleeding from a small wound in the throat. He was awfully excited, but terribly weak, and managed to whisper: "Princess Zouroff had killed him—she was a vampire." Then he fainted dead off.

I hadn't time to think, but bandaged up his wound; some of the men fired at the retreating figure, now entering the fortress gates, and were answered by a heavy fire from the walls, now not more than three hundred yards off.

Nothing could be done but retreat, which we did, losing two men and three wounded. Such an act of treachery was not to be tolerated, and General Weldon, commanding the column, sent an aide-de-camp to demand instant satisfaction; but he and his escort were promptly fired on, narrowly escaping with their lives.

Thus the siege of the fort began. Poor Musgrave was frightfully bad; it was extraordinary how he had lost so much blood. He was too weak to tell us anything, but his horror and nervousness were pitiable; his illness was just like that I had at Hurst. Yet I could not tell my brother officers my dark suspicions; it seemed impossible in these nineteenth century times that such things could be. Still, there was the victim, absolutely drained of his life's blood.

Then Private Commins was court-martialled for deserting his post. At first, Sergeant Gibbons had reported him drunk, but for three days after his capture the man seemed dazed, and quite unconscious of his crime when he came to his senses and during his trial; he swore he had no remembrance of anything beyond halting, when he fancied he saw someone approach his post, and had not the slightest recollection of the wild chase through the moonlight. Finally he was remanded.

It was after his trial I considered it only right to report privately to Colonel King the fakir's horrible stories and my own convictions.

* * * *

The bombardment of Ali Masjid began. Its walls were tottering, but the garrison held out, making constant sorties. General Weldon gave orders for a night attack.

In silence we all formed up and the lines of men advanced towards the doomed fort. As we crept along suddenly a heavy fire was opened on us by the enemy. All concealment now was useless. Our batteries of Royal Horse Artillery, posted on the heights commanding the position, opened a heavy flank fire; sharp volleys blazed all along the companies in the attacking line.

The constant boom of the field-pieces and the crashing volleys from the Lee-Mitfords broke the stillness of the night; the garrison replied briskly, but they had not the correct range and nearly all their shells flew over our heads.

Closer and closer drew the ring of fire; in vain the defenders made a brave sortie; they were hurled back by the storm of shot and shell.

The dawn was breaking when, with an awful explosion, their magazine blew up, wrecking the walls in every direction. The whole of the central building was shattered; great breaches appeared in the outer ramparts. A white flag fluttered from the tower. Victory was ours!

Our General demanded an unconditional surrender. Their envoys, after a long delay, returned to the Princess Zoraide with our ultimatum—her castle was to be surrendered, and she and her troops were prisoners of war; all their captives were to be instantly released.

The ancient fakir, Abdullah Khan, was in great glee at their downfall.

"The man-eating devils now surely would be purged off the earth. Iblis would claim them at last!" he chuckled.

We waited some three hours; the enemy made no sign. Through our glasses we could see the whole place was a mass of crumbling ruins from the explosion, but could not discover a single living being. At last we advanced. Everything was in utter chaos and ruin, dismantled guns, desolation everywhere; but not one soul of the defenders, not one corpse—all had vanished. We searched the place in every hole and corner—everyone had disappeared.

"Surely the sahibs now see they were children of Shaitan," said a voice at my elbow. It was Abdullah Khan.

We were in the courtyard that I had been in at my first visit. As he spoke I fancied I heard a voice somewhere beneath my feet—a voice calling, entreating. Again we ransacked the place, and at last came on a dungeon under the yard. There we found six of our missing men chained like dogs to the wall, and seven unfortunate Afridis. Our other comrades were, alas, dead! Poor fellows! The survivors told us an appalling story.

Every one of them must have been hypnotised in some way. When at their posts, in each case they had felt some influence overcoming their will power; after that they remembered nothing till they were chained captives in that cavern.

Zoraide often came through it, deaf to their prayers or curses. She only smiled—a calm cruel smile.

We let the wretched tribesmen go free, blessing us as their "deliverers from the evildoers." Then with dynamite we blew up the place, leaving literally not one stone standing upon the other. Eventually we found a vast underground cavern with long subterranean passages, through which these devils must have escaped, carrying with them all their treasures. No doubt the flag of truce and the parley made by the envoys was merely a ruse to gain time for their retreat.

"The devil takes care of his own," said our men in their rage; but the fakir, in his wisdom, replied: "True, sahibs, but only for a season."

PART III.

ONCE more Dick Haldane and I are at Hurst, and again I resume the narrative. He and I have been saved from a horrible death, that we know, but how many others suffered can never be known. As I think of the brave fellows in my regiment done to death, my eyes fill with tears. Six months ago I arrived at Hurst Towers a miserable invalid from India.

I had not told Otterburne about Zoraide, it was too ghastly, and all details of the taking of Ali Masjid had been carefully kept out of the papers—it was not an account the British public could be expected to believe.

And now the finale—the closing scene of the drama—comes.

The second evening of my story, the Princess Zouroff reappeared at Hurst. As events turned out, fortunately my aunt was away. It was snowing heavily. She was alone, and asked to stay a few days. Otterburne, knowing nothing, hospitably made her welcome.

I was confined to my room, unable to see strangers. Very late at night, the second evening of her visit, he and I were in the picture-gallery. A faint click attracted our attention, when, to our surprise, the picture of Doña Inez swung slowly out on hinges, and from an empty space at the back Princess Zouroff stepped, a vision of beauty, arrayed in a long white robe covered with filmy laces. In one hand she carried a lighted lamp, shading it with the other hand.

We stood surprised in the shade of a heavy *portière*. Was she walking in her sleep? Strange we had never known of the secret passage! But we had no time to think. Slowly she made her way down the corridor. Pausing, at length, in front of an oaken panel, she pressed some hidden spring, and a little cupboard was revealed. Then—I don't know how it happened—but the lamp slipped from her hand, falling with a crash on the floor, the oil spilling over her dress. In a second she was enveloped in flames. We rushed to her help, wrapping a big rug round her, and extinguishing the fire.

Women came and cared for her; but she was terribly burnt, and the doctor could give no hope whatever. As gently as possible my uncle told her the fiat, and asked if she wished any friends to be sent for. Raising herself on her arms, she shrieked in wild despair that she "would never die—she was immortal." He thought she raved in her agony.

The delirium increased. Snatches of old-world songs came to her lips. With quivering voice she chanted:

"When Otterburne's lady shall seek for to slay
The heir still unborn in some distant day;
Death's pale horse that prances so swift in her wake,
And deals death to others, shall her overtake."

She laughed shrilly.

"Death shall not overtake me. Always through the centuries have I been friends with Otterburne."

Even now, in the last moments of her life, her beauty was more marvellous than ever. The devouring fire had spared her face; save for the bandages on her charred limbs, she looked well and strong.

I came to her beside pitying her dreadful end. Not till that moment did I really connect her and that fiend Zoraide. I had my doubts; but as I looked doubt fled; the words of comfort died on my lips.

She was Zoraide. Seeing my agitation, Otterburne told her of my presence. "He is my heir," he explained.

An unutterable terror appeared in her eyes as she gazed at me. "*Your heir?*" she hissed, through her clenched teeth.

Then the end came, awful in its suddenness. Fearful convulsions seized her. She writhed in agony—her face grew dark—an awful scream, sad, despairing—then all was over.

As I looked my last on that face, with none of the calm beauty of death on it, I could see countless wrinkles of age coming over it. It grew old and shrivelled; black bruised marks were round that once white throat. Then the coffin-lid hid the terrible change from the eyes of men.

* * * * *

She was buried in our little country churchyard. We never could find any traces of her friends or property.

Otterburne, Haldane, and I have often talked this matter over. Can it be that, for some inscrutable reasons, some mortals are permitted to live beyond the allotted span? Certain it was our legend seems to have been fulfilled, if such be the case.

I do not like to linger on the tragedy of Princess Zouroff, or Zoraide, but afterwards we found in the recess she opened the night of her death a parchment, written in sixteenth-century English. This we had deciphered. Suffice it to say it was a receipt for the Elixir of Life, signed by Doctor Dee, the astrologer, and addressed to the then Lady Otterburne.

The ingredients were—I will not give them in detail, but human blood and arsenic figured largely in the concoction.

As the coffin containing the remains of the Princess was carried out of the castle gates, the portrait of Doña Inez fell from its place with a crash to the floor. The canvas caught on the pedestal of a statuette, and was torn straight across, the pictured face being utterly obliterated.

And thus must her memory fade from the minds of her descendants.

OIL.*

By C. W. MASON.

THE latest authentic statistics about Mr. John D. Rockefeller, who came to the oil-fields a penniless youth in 1862, formed a local Standard Company in 1870, and organised the great secret-society trust in 1880, are as follows:—

He employs 25,000 men, 200 steamers, 7000 delivery carts, and 3000 tank-cars, controls 25,000 miles of pipe-lines or oil-conduits, and 38,000 miles of railroad, uses 40,000 tanks holding fifteen hundred million gallons of oil, spends every year a million and a half sterling for 5-gallon cans for export, and a million sterling for local barrels, and deals out in wages £15,000 daily, on which he supports, controls, and keeps entirely under his command, a population of 70,000 souls. His realisable assets are put down at fifty millions sterling, which makes him far and away the wealthiest potentate on earth, and his income, which accumulates at the rate of nearly £5000 a day whether he will or no, amounts to £5 a minute, asleep or awake.

Such titanic figures force one to look on oil with respect; and inquire about it.

Oil is like coal or water; you can never be quite sure where you will strike it, even on a well-defined bed. It may lie in streaks, belts, pools, or be evenly distributed over a wide area, like the only worked Canadian field, which is thirty-five miles by four. Drilling is therefore always going on, for there is always the chance of striking a gusher, or at least of tapping a streak which runs under your neighbour's acre, a form of acquisition dearer to the human soul than a pocket on one's own claim.

The depth of a well to strike pay sand varies between 1500 and 2500 feet, and takes a week to bore, with the aid of a donkey-engine and a walking-beam; the drill consists of a steel wedge fixed in a ton-weight sinker which keeps on pegging away, up and down, until the hole is choked with rubble and the wedge is blunted. Then, while the wedge is being changed, a valved tube called the sand pump is put down and sucks up the dust and water.

If there is gas with the oil it will force it up, but a pump is always used; if the well is dry you torpedo it, and if you strike a "pool" it will "gush." Gushers have been known to give thousands of barrels in the first day, but the average output of the Canadian wells which I have visited is only half a barrel a day. Ten years ago, a boring took about six weeks, and cost £500.

* Serial rights in England only.

Torpedoing is done with fifteen quarts of liquid nitro-glycerine fired by a time-fuse, and costs from £5 to £10. Formerly dynamite was used, sometimes as much as to be equivalent to 5000 pounds of gunpowder, and it was exploded by dropping a brick on a guncap fixed in the tin.

The operator was called the "torpedo-fiend," and his occupation was exhilarating.

The explosion is felt but not heard. The effect is to break up a new stratum of compressed sand and the lower walls of the well, in the hopes of tapping a fresh streak. If it "fetches a gusher" there is a rush on torpedoes round about, and the vicinity is liable to be flooded; in which case you have only to drop a match to see a pretty conflagration marching along like a ten-foot wall, eating its way to water-level.

Pumping is now done from a 100 horse-power house, which, by means of connecting rods and "jerkers," will pump perhaps one hundred wells; day and night, night and day, the jerkers keep up their rattle and squeak, and the effect is soothing to a delicate ear. The well is of course tubed, and the oil sucked up through a 2-inch pipe; this connects with a gridiron system of underground conduits leading to hundreds of storage-tanks. On the Pennsylvanian fields the oil is conveyed by main pipe-lines to the shipping ports, varying from seventy miles for Buffalo to three hundred miles for Philadelphia. In Canada, which does not export, the oil is pumped into railway tank-cars which are removed bodily at the different termini.

The Petrolia (Canadian) oil field has the appearance of a huge hop-garden, with derricks for poles. You can smell it while yet a long way off, and people visit the smell as a cure for hay fever. You can also hear the ding-dong of the jerkers a long way off, and fame, but not fortune, awaits the genius who suggests them as a cure for deafness.

The price of oil in England is the same as in America, very nearly: 6*d.* to 10*d.* In Canada, which is next door to Buffalo and Detroit, the price of the same oil is 1*s.* 3*d.*; but in exchange they offer you the local product at—5*d.*? No; 10*d.* for the worst quality, which smells. This is what is called Protection: the protection of home industries.

Canada has six months of winter and short days, and while all its inhabitants are poor, a great number live away from gas and electricity and coal, and are quite dependent on oil. We thus see that the protection of industries is sometimes gained at the expense of the industrious. If I can claim the invention of the phrase, I am afraid I cannot claim the discovery of the fact. Columbus discovered Protection. Its present exponent is the Land of the Free, of the Eagle, and of Dingley.

The two principal sources of oil-supply, Pennsylvania and Batoum, are getting played out, although they are far from showing it yet.

Canada at present has only one field, the Lambton or Petrolia, near Sarnia in south-west Ontario, and that exists only through the protective tariff, which doubles the price of American oil on crossing the border. But Canada holds the future. It is well known that immense stretches of bituminous sands extend along the Peace and Athabasca Rivers in the North-West, and Klondike will open them up. So will spruce, farther north, which is coming into great demand for paper pulp.

Let me very briefly mention some of the history and side-lights of oil.

Its gas-flame was in ancient times, and still is, worshipped by the Zoroastrians of Persia, and Hindus make yearly pilgrimages to the fire-shrines of Baku. The Seneca Indians used to gather round a marsh, apply a torch to its will-o'-the-wisps, and dance mournfully. The Athabasca Indians worship it more practically by knocking a hole in the crust and cooking their pots over the gas-jet; so do the Chinese of Szechuan. The pioneer and bachelor in their attic use a half-crown stove for censer, and sacrifice to it a herring and a pot of tea. Stock-jobbers bow down before it, and call its high-priest Mammon.

Marco Polo, who always had an eye to the practical, tells us that the Caspian naphtha was used as a cure for dog-mange. Long before it was used in lamps, American settlers discovered its virtue as an embrocation for horses. For a long time "Seneca Oil" was sold as a patent medicine for rheumatics. Scented up a little, and put up in fancy bottles, it still plays the good old trick of a mysterious panacea. But every housewife by this time knows its properties, without giving a fancy price for a name. Primarily, it is good for the hair; falling hair, scurvy hair, mangy hair. Quite recently it has been discovered to be peculiarly efficacious for destroying the good hair with the bad by a process called spontaneous combustion. Dog-owners know its properties. A spoonful of oil in hot water will wash clothes; this the Chinese laundryman knows across the streak. It removes rust. It is good for sore throat. Internally, it kills consumption. The French have recently discovered that it is a tasty substitute for absinthe. I fancy distillers of Forty Rod knew its spirituous qualities long ago. It lubricates. It makes wax, vaseline, candies, eating-gum, soap, dyes.

But more than all these things, it oils the wheels of commerce. It brought forth the father of the "great combine," the economical useful, dangerous system of trusts. Its insinuating properties glide through the prejudice of centuries, and spread with rapid imperceptible stealth into remote parts of barbarism, heralding through the length and breadth of China the advantages of foreign trade. Stronger than bayonets, soothing troubled waters of fear, it carries civilisation and incendiarism wherever it goes.

A SPROUT IN A STUNTED LIFE.

THROUGH the warped shutters of a bare bedroom in a gloomy London street the dust-tempered sunbeams struck concentrated shafts of light, rousing to the daily treadmill one of those countless sons of toil, who have, apparently, few interests in life beyond that of continuing to live.

"Man goeth forth to his labour until the evening." What fair pictures those words suggest of planting, sowing, reaping, the swinging scythe, the treading of the wine-press, the melodious tinkle of the anvil, of definite results of individual craft! Poor Alfred Meakin's work was of a different order, allied rather to that of the patient turnspit than of the stately cart-horse. He was one of the least considered clerks in a small shabby house of business, the profits of which were not frittered away in adequate salaries to its employées. Had he never learnt to read or write, he might long ago have been "improved off" this improving world, for he was of a poor physique and a feeble courage. As it was, he was better off than many of his neighbours, for he secured to himself the necessities of life, and therewith—obedient to the maxims of all right-thinking and well-to-do persons—had learnt to be content. He did not even "earnestly desire his shadow"—he desired nothing.

"Ted" was the pseudonym by which he was commonly known, not that it was any form of his name, but because it suited him, as did his smooth retreating chin, his colourless hair, his shabby coat—which seemed to fit his character by right of its not fitting his figure—and his deprecatory air, which, when genuine, is not the kind of wear for a struggle with environment. Only his landlady, a kind-hearted soul, though literally and figuratively slipshod, called him "Mr. Meakin."

As he hastily washed down a "fresh egg" (as distinguished from new-laid) with a cup of tea, thickly inhabited by unexpanded tea-leaves, it gave him no special pleasure to remember that this was Saturday, when it was optional for those employed in Grind and Skinner's establishment to plunge into their own elected vortex some hours earlier than usual. He did not know how to amuse himself, because he was one of those who know only what they have been taught; in the reminiscences of his childhood, neither play nor affection bore any part. His condition did not call for the compassion bestowed on those who have seen better days, his present being on the whole more prosperous than his past. He could not recollect anyone caring about him, and not being at all interesting, he attached to himself no chums and made no enemies; he was

too insignificant to be an object of love or hate—even of liking or disliking.

The day dragged on, its dry duties conscientiously, if rather laboriously, performed. The perennial witticisms at his expense had fallen, as usual, dead on his unheeding ears. No unwonted circumstance marked the morning, except the brightness of the sunshine, which, streaming through the skylight of the little office where he sat cramped up with half-a-dozen others, would have been more welcome anywhere else. It filled some of those subject to its influence with visions of Hampstead, or at least of the glittering waters of the Serpentine, whereon—who knows?—they might shortly be disporting themselves to the exceeding discomfiture of other oarsmen. "Ted" was merely impressed with the conviction that the room was very hot, and his programme limited itself to "a little walk." The novelty attending this enterprise was none of his devising nor desiring. Such as it was, it forms my excuse for dragging this obscure person from his doubtlessly well-merited obscurity.

Wandering rather aimlessly about—for on Saturday afternoons the vicarious satisfactions of shop-windows are denied to the multitude—Meakin found himself in Trafalgar Square, where one of those gentlemen who propose to regenerate the human race by a complete subversion of the iniquitous laws of Meum and Tuum, was shouting and plunging about, as freely as the insecurity of his temporary platform would admit of. Around him was gathered a phlegmatic crowd—for any nucleus serves—gazing on the excited orator, as at a Punch and Judy show with the comic element omitted.

From sheer vacancy of mind and will, poor Meakin constituted himself one of this rapidly increasing, mutually attracted concourse of atoms; but presently beginning to get wedged, and not being possessed of mental or physical fibre to hold his own in any kind of competition, he cast about for some loop-hole of escape, and speedily became aware of a hiatus in the mass of heads, which mostly overtopped his own. This he discovered to be due to the diminutive stature of a small boy, whose countenance, when Ted first caught sight of him, was passing through that stage which lies between bewilderment and tears, and who had just begun to yell: "Timsie, Timsie!" at the top of his voice.

Ted touched him on the shoulder.

"Catch hold of my hand," he said, "and we'll see if we can't find Timsie."

This proceeding proved a mutual accommodation, for a crowd in the aggregate is good-natured, and does not want to crush children, so they soon found themselves on the fringes of it, Meakin also piping "Timsie!" in tones scarcely more full-bodied than those of the robust, well-nourished infant he was conveying.

"And who's 'Timsie, little master?" he asked, having now had time to take in the superior garb of his *protégé*.

"She's Timsie," replied the child. "Mrs. Timsie!" he added, with dignity.

"She'd ought to know better than bring a babe like you out here—partickler of a Saturday."

"I ain't a baby; I'se a big 'ittle boy—years and years old."

"And how came you to lose her?"

"Went after funny black man wiv a white hat; and then Timsie wasn't there!"

"Why didn't you ask a policeman?"

Ted had no notion he was quoting.

"Don't like nasty pleece!"

Meakin marvelled why one apparently by birthright exempt from any collision with the guardians of the peace should express such unfounded prejudices against that useful body. It was in vain to try to extract any distinctive description of "Timsie" beyond "She's Timsie, and she dot a black jacket," which presented no definite idea to his companion's mind. They walked about till the Square was comparatively empty, and still no claimant for the poor little derelict appeared. Meakin began to feel uncomfortably suspicious. Could the child have been lost purposely? Ought he to take him to the police-station? The responsibility was embarrassing. The little boy was all very well in his way, and Ted's poor dried-up heart, which had suffered from inanition all its life, swelled and glowed as he felt the unwonted pressure of the tiny soft hand dragging at his; but still, what was to be done? How was this novel experience to be dealt with?

Something very unusual now occurred; he cogitated and resolved; his hard step-mother, Necessity, having previously resolved everything for him. He decided to get an advertisement into the paper without delay. Saturday was an awkward day, he realised that—it was all awkward! Oh, dear! Life was awkward altogether! He considered the contents of his purse. Nothing there certainly that could be conveniently spared for waifs and strays, without prejudice to the little weekly reserve for a rainy day; but then, "ill-convenience" was a familiar condition too. On his way to the office of a Sunday paper, claiming amongst many others "the largest circulation," he made some futile efforts to extract from his small companion some kind of definite account of himself. The nearest approach to enlightenment he obtained was through a remark proffered by the child of his own accord.

"All the pretty sings in the sops put to bed," he said.

Meakin explained that early closing was the rule on Saturday.

"Sops don't sut early Sat'days at Tipton; there's fine sops there, too."

"And where's Tipton, little master?"

"Near home—where Timsie and me comed from yes'day in fast puff-puff!"

Meakin was finally reduced to grounding his first effort in journalism

on his own observations for the matter, and on his reminiscences of the "agony column" for the diction, bearing in mind that brevity was an object in this description of literary composition.

"Found, Trafalgar Square, June 18, small boy, velvet suit, fair, answers to name of Bazzamazza." (Ted had not accepted this pseudonym without repeated interrogations.) "Above returned on application to A. M., 160, Beulah Street, W.C."

Then it occurred to him with a force strengthened by sympathy that his charge must be "dying for his tea." On the way home he purchased a plum cake, and at a small toyshop which did not observe holidays a box of bricks—for children had to be *amused*. My, that *was* a job! He began to feel like a responsible head of a family. The dormant manliness in him was called forth by the fact of having something to protect.

Little Bazzamazza did not at first think highly of his new patron's quarters. He wanted to know why there were not a variety of things there which poor Alfred, in some cases, had never even heard of. Mrs. Bounce was in ecstasies with the new tenant—hadn't she buried five, bless her heart!—her portly bosom glowed with maternal emotion over the pretty foundling. She added to the feast jam from her own stores, and, under all these influences, and the pleasure of finding himself completely cock of the walk, Bazy soon made himself at home, and even received with a certain indifference Meakin's assurance that he was going out to inquire after Timsie.

He left the child in Mrs. Bounce's charge whilst he sought the police-station and got the lost property placed on the official books. On returning he found his landlady on the verge of apoplexy, by reason of her spirited personification of an unbroken charger, attached to an arm-chair (not likewise unbroken), on which stood Bazy in the attitude of a charioteer of ancient Greece.

After his heated playmate had, somewhat reluctantly, descended the stairs to resume her normal avocations, the evening was spent in architectural pursuits, in which Ted became quite as much engrossed as his companion, to whom they were by no means so novel. All the senior architect's Towers of Babel, etc., were forthwith blown down by Bazzamazza with shouts of joy as soon as they attained such a perilous height as to be liable to such casualties. At intervals Meakin tried to sound his infant guest on the subject of his family history. He stuck persistently to the name he had originally claimed, spite of all opportunities offered him to adopt some less eccentric title. Ned gathered that the child's "pa and ma," who were unknown to him, and in whom he professed very faint interest, were just coming back from "Cutta," that he lived with an invalid aunt who had "the palaces" in her legs, and that "Timsie" had brought him up to meet his parents. Meakin also came to the conclusion that his charge had been born in India, and perhaps called after some place or person there—an idol possibly.

Well, of course they would advertise, or see his advertisement. He realised with a shock that the thought gave him no satisfaction. He did not at the moment reason about the complications that must arise from the saddling of this fresh burden on his slender resources. He *did* realise that he had never spent so happy an evening in his life; and as he lay on the shake-down which Mrs. Bounce had prepared for him, and listened to the child's regular breathing from his own hard couch, he yielded to the temptation of working out complications founded on hypothesis, turning over in his mind all sorts of plans for making what had supported one so frugally do for two. There was a little put by, but that ought not to be requisitioned, and he could think of no dispensable luxury for the excellent reason that for him no luxuries existed. Two rooms were not necessary—poor as they were—yet he was glad to have them just now. He could cut off his egg at breakfast, but if he gave the child eggs they must be better ones, so that would save nothing. His modest glass of beer at the chop-house—that must go; he would take some copying to do at night if he could get it. But after all, would he be called upon to make these willing sacrifices? And thus he ruminated till the sparrows twittered on the eaves and he fell asleep, to be waked by Bazy putting a cold sponge to his face with shrieks of laughter.

This, at all events, should be a Gala-day—the Day of Rest, which, to the man whose Conscious Ego had hitherto been absorbed in his dull routine of work, had been also one of boredom. But to-day he was a responsible individual—he had someone to amuse, to propitiate—he longed for the affection of this little “stray,” the first creature who had ever depended on him.

The question of how to spend “a happy day,” at the minimum of cost was temporarily settled by Bazy's dictum on hearing the first stroke of a neighbouring church-bell.

“Time to go to church.” And then ruefully, “Not dot my Sunday hat.”

Poor Meakin had attended very fitfully to his religious duties since the time when he used to be walked to church in procession—a very small, pale, straw-coloured Sunday scholar—to sit through a long morning service, which might as well have been in Latin so far as he was concerned, in a dark and draughty corner—more docile than any of the others, controlled as they were by the vigilant eye of a very juvenile lady teacher, whose sole title to be such was grounded on a certain capacity for subduing the restlessness of infant extremities during an hour and a half of enforced silence and inactivity. Now a new chamber opened out in his Spanish castle. Supposing—ah!—supposing what he could no longer conceal from himself was a hope rather than an apprehension—the infant would have to be “religiously brought up,” as became the offspring of Church and State parents. The thought of the baker's wife at the top of the street and her model family occurred to him with a sense of relief. But at least he

could go to church with his charge, who was determined that everything should be done in the usual order so far as the absence of the Sunday hat would admit of, so an old battered prayer-book had to be extracted from the bottom of a locked hair trunk.

In church they took their places in the free seats close to the door—very pleasant in the height of summer except for the noise outside—at any other time of the year not so well for the old, rheumatic, or ill-clothed parishioners, who were alone invited to occupy them, but who very rarely did so. Throughout the service Bazy expected to have all the places found for him, which would have nonplussed his companion had he not noticed that the book was held from choice upside down. So the strains of Tate and Brady at the end of it answered the purpose nicely. Bazy sang the hymns conscientiously, in a voice which had not, fortunately, as yet acquired much strength—songs without any *sequence* of words, at all events—the melodies of which Mendelssohn would not have owned to. He slept during the sermon, and sitting there, with the child's head resting on his arm, poor Meakin was conscious of a curious feeling of restfulness—a kind of yearning to sit there so for ever, and never again be called upon to take up the thread of life. The sermon was not of a nature to touch or reach him; it was far above his humble head; but he fixed his eyes on the coloured window in the east—it was early Victorian, but how should he know?—and the pictured stories there lifted him for a while out of his own poor sordid sphere, and produced an unwonted glow of tranquil content which was not mere apathy.

Mrs. Bounce had concocted a Sunday dinner which, for once, almost did her credit; and as she was liberal with the jam in the second course, Bazzamazza was unconscious of all deficiencies. Jam was still jam to him whether it was "real" or founded on such fictions as carrots, turnips, and rhubarb. Meakin began to feel as if this child were one of the natural conditions of his existence, nor did he now care to speculate on the duration of this condition. The day was very hot, and, with a thoughtfulness which surprised himself, he induced his charge to take a nap, whilst he went timidly forth to interview the model mother, and, for the first time in his recollection, to ask a favour.

The Kempsons were enjoying a conjugal *tête-à-tête* in their snug parlour, the comparative coolness of which was a real treat to "the master" after his week-day experiences. The junior members of the family had been packed off to Sunday school an hour ago, starched to crackling point. Mrs. Kempson had always entertained a kindly, though slightly contemptuous pity for her flaccid neighbour, but he rose greatly in her esteem after opening his mission. All the woman in her warmed to the task of helping him in so worthy a cause, and rose to the spice of romance she scented in the episode. But after Meakin was gone, she turned to her spouse who had sat smoking, taciturn and placid, during the interview between his wife and her

petitioner, and exhorted him to keep a sharp look-out on the advertisements in the "dailies."

"For it seems it me," she added, "that poor fellow don't know what he's undertaking."

"'Twould be hard to say," replied Mr. Kempson, "what he *do* know!"

"Ah, he'll know more, one of these days, than a good many! There's mansions for such as he, you mark my words!"

Mr. Kempson slowly knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and poised it midway to his lips to chuckle.

"Can't think but what 'twill be poor company in them mansions," he said. "But," he added, after a pause, "you're right, old girl, right enough, as you mostly are! I *will* say that much!"

Meanwhile the object of these speculations returned lighter of heart for the success of his mission, and heavier in pocket for a consignment of presentation buns, which were produced at an early tea. He was going to enjoy his Sunday evening for once. An outlay of fourpence would defray the cost of an outing to Hyde Park, the glories of which would doubtless delight and impress Bazzamazza's infant mind. Ted's own retiring nature would have led him to prefer the inside of the omnibus, but "little master" would not hear of that. He revelled in his exalted position as an outside fare. The route was one succession of blissful novelties, and Ted was as unsuccessful in finding out to what part of the metropolis the child had been brought as the country from whence he came. It was always "way out there!"—stretching both his little arms as far as they would go. "To big house"—presumably an hotel.

"Was it Bayswater, Paddington, Grosvenor Square, Oxford Street?"

"No-o, London town."

Bazzy was very much bored by these retrospective questions, his interest was all in the novelties of the moment.

"Will Timsie see us up here?" he wondered; "and what will she say *then*?"

Meakin felt half afraid that she might. What a change had come over his views of things since—could it have been only twenty-six hours ago?

"Little master" chattered incessantly as they went along, and poor Meakin's bosom glowed with unwonted pride at the notice his pretty companion attracted amongst their fellow-passengers. The Piccadilly houses were much to Bazzy's taste. Why didn't Ted live in one of *them*? he wanted to know. Ted opined that it would "take a lot o' money to do that."

"I dot a lot o' money," said the child, after a short pause, "in a box. Timsie's dot the box."

"My! have you, then? Lucky little master. How much may it be now?"

"Ten shillings—and five I dot. If I was to give you *all* dat, could you live in one of *them*?"

Meakin mentally calculated that if every shilling were a hundred pound note, the sum total might, perhaps, suffice for rent and taxes for a year, but he only said:

"Do you think I'd suit one of those houses, little master? Beulah Street does well enough for me."

"But those would do well," persisted Bazzy, wondering that his munificent offer was not promptly closed with.

The beauty of Kensington Gardens did not impress the novice as his Cockney guardian hoped it would. Clearly he was accustomed to big trees and artificial water, probably of a cleaner and clearer order, but there were boats and swans on the river which produced raptures, and the trees did nicely for the compromise between "Bo-peep" and "High Spy" in which he enlisted the co-operation of his willing slave, regardless of eighty-two in the shade. Meakin would have panted to his last breath, rather than say him nay, and when at last they came to a mooring on a bench, the child's little pink moist face looked almost dark against his ruffled golden hair. Then the reversion of the buns was produced, and the contents of that suspicious-looking bottle of harmless milk and water which had strained the capacities of Ted's pocket all along. Bazzy was an indefatigable walker, being very big and sturdy for his age, so they finished up with the Round Pond, where the mimic fleet formed the most exciting event of the day, and Meakin found himself making magnanimous promises of a boat "before they came again."

Then they strolled homewards hand in hand in the cool of the evening, the setting sun twinkling and winking between the black boles of the trees. When they reached a clear space, the child looked back.

"Look—pretty!" he exclaimed.

Like a huge lamp-globe, ruby red, just resting on the horizon, hung Heaven's stupendous agent of all good things on earth, clearly defined as through a slightly smoked glass in the hazy but wonderfully picturesque atmosphere of a fine London evening. Meakin had never *felt* the beauty of the scene before—seeing it, as he now did, through a child's eyes.

"S'pose an' if it was to come down into the water, would that put it out?" asked Bazzy.

"That would be a bad job, my dear," replied his friend. "Lucky it can't!"

At the gate a variety of carriages and pair competed for their patronage. The tired child slept all the way back in his incongruous companion's lap, but Meakin pondered all the sensations which had that day revolved round this unconscious axis, and how the water had danced and the sunbeams laughed, and how they had been going down, down into the water.

Another night, and still the treasure was unclaimed. Next morning's post passed Mr. Alfred Meakin over with its wonted regularity. He arranged that Mrs. Bounce should take the child over to Mrs. Kempson's at half-past nine to spend the day with her younger children, who were little aristocrats, and had a girl to "mind" them what time the mother's eye was perforce distracted. Poor Mrs. Bounce was not a too reliable guardian even of herself—but in any case, with a house swarming with lodgers from cellar to attic, she could not resent the removal of Bazy from her custody. Meakin went forth with quite a zest to his work. Why shouldn't he try very hard to "get up" and earn more? Others did so and he had been a long time at that office; but as soon as he started his dull routine there was no room for dreaming in his circumscribed brain. The docking of his glass of beer was regarded with contemptuous disapproval by the officials at the chop-house.

"You 'air'll never curl at that rate," the pert waitress told him.

"I ain't one to expect impossibilities, miss," replied Ted, with more spirit than he usually displayed. One of his fellow-clerks waxed very facetious, emphasizing his sarcasms with one eye and the tip of his tongue after the manner of his kind.

"Touch of the gaout, miss," he said. "Ah, 'igh livin' and self-indulgence fainds as all aout, soona or lata!"

Meakin tried to fancy that he was more wideawake and alert than usual that afternoon as a result of his small economy. Something produced that effect, but it probably belonged rather to anticipation than retrospect. On the way home he stopped, as arranged, at "Kempson's" to fetch his ward.

"He's never been brought here," announced the comely mistress of the house, rather austere. "We didn't give him up till one o'clock," she added, "and there was a nice currant pudding and all!"

Ted felt as indignant as it was in his mouse-like nature to be. He planted the old chimney-pot, which he usually wore at an acute angle with his nose, firmly on his sloping forehead, which lent him a feeling of greater determination, and hastened homewards to "give it" to Mrs. Bounce ere his courage failed. Suppose she had been "heartening herself up" as she called it; suppose—oh, horrid thought!—she had taken the child out under those circumstances? He almost tore down the street, and ran up-stairs two steps at a time.

But before reaching his own door, his wrath was disarmed by the apparition of a blowsy figure awaiting him there—a grotesque combination of Silenus and Niobe. She gave her breathless opponent no time to speak.

"You hadn't been gone half an hour, Mr. Meakin," she exclaimed, "but what they come—the three of 'em—and says they, 'Ain't there a little boy here as was lost on Saturday?' and no more words, but in they m-marched, Sir something Mather—there's the card as you

should see the address—a soldier-looking man and his lady as 'aughty as could be, and little master, he wouldn't look at his mother, but just runs to Mrs. Timsie who was with them and throws his pretty arms round her neck. And then without any more to do after asking your name very partickler, off they goes—right away."

Ted felt as though the world had suddenly grown empty.

"Did he—did the little one," he asked wistfully, "leave any message—good-bye or that—for me, Mrs. Bounce?"

"Well you know, Mr. Meakin, child-like, he was that took up with his nurse—they're all for the change is children—and——"

"And he—they—was there any word of my going to see the child or anything of that by any chance?"

Mrs. Bounce shook her head and murmured something about their being high and mighty.

"But the General did say something about writing," she added, as if it were an after-thought.

Ted was gazing vacantly out of the window at the grimy houses opposite. A dirty drizzle had begun to fall, and it seemed to him as if that outlook bounded his life's horizon. Never had he felt so lonely.

"He needn't trouble to write," he said huskily. "It's not that I want—not that!"

* * * * *

He had become very deaf and blind to any tales or visions which hope might tell or show him, and yet the sunshine was not far behind that murky medium through which he had got accustomed to view life.

He himself would scarcely have recognised the Alfred Meakin of to-day expanded and developed as he is by the warmth and brightness into which a helping hand had drawn him up. He holds quite a responsible situation now, such as his honesty and assiduity deserve. He does not dwell in a Piccadilly mansion, but in the cosiest of small homes over which the unknown "Timsie," on whom he once vainly called, exercises a benevolent despotism. She is much admired and revered by her tractable spouse; but the object of his adoration is a little sturdy, healthy namesake of the original Basil. He and his father are in perfect sympathy, for in his company the old child-nature of Ted reasserts itself.

But he had never known the happiness of childhood till it was grafted on his life a few years ago in Trafalgar Square by the touch of a tiny hand.

A. M. PROTHERO.

"LOVE KNOWS NO CASTE."

GREGORY PHIPPS and his wife sat long over their late breakfast. On this particular morning Mrs. Phipps was reading aloud from the closely-written pages of a letter she held in her hand. The letter was so long that Gregory lit a cigar before the end was reached, looking longingly at the morning paper lying unfolded beside his plate. But he was too polite to do other than listen while his wife read to him. He always listened to his wife—only wincing when she told him the same thing three times in an evening; he never reproached her with the fact.

There are such men.

"So you see," read Mrs. Phipps, "how gladly I accept your invitation for Rhoda just now. The whole affair has been such a disappointment to us; it would have been a very suitable marriage in every respect—so pleasing to her father and to me; but of course we cannot force her inclinations, and, as I daresay you discovered during the time you spent with her, she is not a girl whom it is possible to coerce. You know with what satisfaction I trust her in your kind hands; the new atmosphere, so different to our own, will be ever so good for her. Upon one thing, however, I must lay a veto—Rhoda must not go to the theatre. You know her father's very pronounced views on this question. It would greatly distress him to hear that she had entered one of the places he holds in such detestation. You know that I do not share his opinions with regard to this subject; but anent such a question submission is the only right, indeed the only possible course."

Mrs. Phipps paused, and, tapping the letter impatiently with her finger, waited for her husband to speak.

"Well?" she asked at last, as Gregory remained silent. "Did you ever hear anything so absurd? Isn't it a shame that the prejudices of that tiresome old man should come in and spoil all the lovely time I had planned for Rhoda? I am astonished at Mrs. Black. She is not a bit narrow herself, and yet she allows him to lay down the law in this absurd fashion——"

"But, my dear, if you entertain the pretty daughter—she is pretty, you say?—of an eminent Scotch divine, you must expect some restrictions. Be thankful that he doesn't expect to revise your visiting list while she is with you!"

"Gregory, you are tiresome. Haven't I told you again and again that Mrs. Black and Rhoda are charming. I've never seen him, and I don't want to; but Mrs. Black I know to be a broad-minded, cultivated woman—and they were so good to me when I was laid up in Florence last spring. I did want to give Rhoda a real good time,

and she is just the sort of girl to thoroughly enjoy it. Gregory, do say that it is odious! She knows that you are a dramatic critic, and that——"

"It's a pity, my dear, but it can't be helped. The girl will find London amusing enough after all you tell me of the kind of society they see most of in Edinburgh. Why won't the young lady marry her father's curate, or whatever he is?"

"Oh! I don't know. His curate—only that's not what they call him—is very handsome and young, a brilliant preacher, with his photograph in all the shop windows, and a great following of faithful women. Their church is one of the most fashionable in Edinburgh. They are very wealthy, you know; there's nothing of the Kail Yaird school about the Blacks, I assure you. I believe Rhoda's real objection to the brilliant minister is that he is lacking in the sense of humour. That ought to appeal to you, Gregory!"

"It does." And with that ungrudging admission Gregory Phipps thought himself at liberty to open his newspaper.

* * * * *

"Walking in maiden wise,
Modest and kind and fair,
The freshness of spring in her eyes
And the fulness of spring in her hair."

These lines rang through Gregory's head, as, sitting on a little green chair in the Row on a sunny afternoon at the end of May, he watched a tall girl who came swiftly towards him in the stream of people. She walked well, looking about her with a pleased interest which was reflected in the faces of the people who met her glance.

It is good to be young, and "modest, and fair, and kind." There is something in the sight of such youth which gladdens men's hearts; for in spite of the new fiction, in spite of the boom in women "with a past," the look in young innocent eyes is and always will be a pleasant and potent influence.

Such eyes had Rhoda Black. Perhaps best described by an undergraduate cousin of Gregory's: "Her eyes make a man think of his mother and wish he wasn't such a brute."

As Mrs. Phipps had predicted, Gregory and their guest were the best of friends. Men in general are kindly disposed towards a young and pretty girl, even if she is stupid; Rhoda was not stupid. Her severely conventional environment had left no perceptible impress upon her character. Original and unspoiled, to quite an unusual degree, she was in no way disposed to take life too seriously, and her frank enjoyment of such "fun" as came in her way was a continual refreshment to Gregory.

Never having read 'Keynotes,' 'The Heavenly Twins,' or 'The Sorrows of Satan,' or, indeed, any of that daring fiction beloved of young ladies of mediocre intelligence, she was not in the least curious

as to the private lives of the people she met, but, believing everyone to be as honest and kindly as herself, was seldom disillusioned.

The old fable of the echo is one of the eternal verities. Gregory and his wife were endlessly hospitable in an easy-going way. Theirs was a popular house. Intimates called the house Thelema, and as most of the *habitués* were "artists" in some sense—all of them more or less witty or amusing—Rhoda found the atmosphere positively intoxicating after the perhaps rarer, but certainly sad-coloured air of the grave and sober *milieu* in which she had been reared.

Besides, there was Fabyan Ross. At that time all London raved about him, and had it not been for what happened that spring, he would probably have been utterly spoiled; then this story could never have been written.

Given a young man, with the education and traditional training of a gentleman, dramatic power amounting to genius, and the leading part in a clever and somewhat daring play dealing with modern life—the young man in question has unusual opportunity for the cultivation of a colossal egoism. Gregory had known Fabyan in his Eton and Oxford days, had made many pilgrimages to admire his rowing form and his performances for the A. D. C. Finally, he had assisted at the youth's *début* in what had become the dramatic success of the year.

Great ladies *fêted* him, literary ladies took him very seriously indeed, and the ladies highest in his own profession were extremely desirous of appearing in the play-bill with him. What wonder, then, if in the midst of such clouds of incense his brain became a thought bemused and his mental vision somewhat hazy. He came very often to Thelema, partly because he was very fond of his host and hostess, partly because he was quite clever enough to see that there he would be judged by his qualities as a man, the popular actor being of quite secondary consideration.

"I am sorry that my father won't let me go to the theatre; I should like to see you act." Thus Rhoda somewhat wistfully to Fabyan one afternoon when Mrs. Phipps "received" to an extent that drove Gregory to the verge of imbecility and the kitchen stairs. He did not love his friends in herds.

"I feel that I am not at all sorry. It is pleasant to me to feel that that much-photographed young man, Fabyan Ross, the actor, is quite outside our intercourse, that you allow me, the real me, to call you my friend."

Rhoda looked up a little surprised, for Fabyan had thrown a good deal of meaning into the sympathetic voice which his admirers considered his great charm.

"I don't see how you can detach yourself from your art." Rhoda had heard a great deal about "Art" lately, and the word came trippingly on the tongue. "It is your life surely, the very reallest part of you?"

Fair-haired, slim and boyish-looking, Fabyan might have passed for eighteen but for the tired lines round his eyes; eyes with dark brows and lashes, the iris of that clear grey which expresses both power and penetration. His eyes were very kindly, as he said: "Perhaps it was affectation in me to say that; but as you have known no theatrical folk, you do not realise how unpleasant it is to be always suspected of posing. How apt the world is to shrug its shoulders and smile at the incongruity of an 'artist' really feeling anything! We only imagine that we feel, according to these wiseacres."

"I don't think you can complain of unkindness or lack of appreciation on the part of the world," laughed Rhoda. "It seems to me that hereabout a popular actor is worshipped to an extent that is positively ridiculous!"

Fabyan coloured. "Evidently the man does not strike you as particularly worshipful?"

"No, I can't say he does; but then I don't think that young people are ever worshipful. I can never feel very respectful to anyone about my own age."

"My dear young lady, I am years older than you: pray how old do you imagine me to be?"

"Oh, I know your age—Mrs. Phipps told me. It's not your age that is so particularly young, it's you!"

"This is entirely a new view of me. I am generally supposed to be young in years, but with an old, old soul."

"Nonsense!" said Rhoda decidedly. "Let us talk about something else. You are far too fond of talking about yourself. It is a bad habit to get into."

"That is perfectly true," sighed Fabyan; "but no one has ever told me so before."

From Rhoda, Fabyan learned many things that no one had ever told him before, things indeed that she did not tell him; among them a great and absorbing need of her. When he wanted a thing, this young man set about getting it with a dogged perseverance hitherto usually crowned by success. Here was something that he found he wanted so tremendously that the strength of the feeling surprised even himself. Never did mediæval knight strive harder to win the smiles of his lady than did Fabyan Ross to please this low-voiced girl who spoke with a Scotch accent, who was in no way remarkable, only "modest and kind and fair," and sincere alike of speech and thought.

* * * *

Of course, Mr. and Mrs. Phipps saw how the land lay with the young actor, but whether Rhoda simply regarded him with the same friendly interest that she bestowed on all their guests, or with a feeling stronger and more intimate, they could not determine. They congratulated themselves upon the fact that he never saw her alone, forgetting that in a crowded drawing-room two young people can be

in sympathy as absolutely away from the rest of the company as though in the desert of Sahara.

Rhoda was not instructed in such matters as modern psychological analysis. She recked little of "temperament," as the word is now applied. Had she thought of the matter at all, she would probably have placed it in the same category as original sin, to be subdued accordingly. She was, however, well instructed in what was by her parents considered decorous and maidenly conduct; so that the world at large, together with her lover himself, were left quite in the dark as to what her real feelings might be. Moreover they wanted her back in Edinburgh, and her hosts prayed that the whole affair might be merely an episode. She would go back to her people and eventually marry some amiable, large-minded (there are many such in the Scotch Church, they tell me) divine of her father's persuasion, while Fabyan Ross, whose engagement ran for another six weeks, could certainly not follow her—he too would forget.

So reasoned Mrs. Phipps; but Gregory shook his head, and, much as he liked Rhoda, wished she were safe in her father's keeping. He saw breakers ahead. A man can often see further into a young girl's mind than a woman, and what Gregory thought he saw he dreaded.

Rhoda's last day in London had come. She was still sitting at breakfast when the servant brought her a card with the request "Could she see the gentleman at once?"

The gentleman was Fabyan Ross.

The girl turned very pale, but rose instantly and asked if she might go to him. Neither Gregory or his wife accompanied her.

"The fat's in the fire!" groaned Gregory.

"She will refuse him—she must," said Mrs. Phipps, a good deal of nervous indecision in her voice. "It is impossible: they would never consent. Oh, what will her mother say?"

"You should have thought of that before," said Gregory, giving way to a platitude of which he instantly felt ashamed. He lit a cigar which promptly went out, then read his newspaper upside down for full fifteen silent minutes, when he found himself hoping that Rhoda would say yes.

Mrs. Phipps sat on at the table, her head on her hand, wondering, wondering—she was very fond of both these young people, and if only things had been different—

Another five minutes—the door opened rather suddenly and Rhoda and Fabyan came in together.

"Dearie," said Rhoda, in her soft Scotch voice, from behind Mrs. Phipps's chair, "dearie, Mr. Ross has asked me to marry him, and I'm going to as soon as I can."

"As soon as ever she may," echoed Fabyan ruefully.

"We must see them through it, Gregory!" half sobbed Mrs. Phipps as she kissed Rhoda.

Gregory got up, and crossing over to Fabyan, who looked, as he

put it, "disgustingly happy," patted the young man on the shoulder, saying, "They're a self-willed pair; they'll take their own way anyhow." But in his heart of hearts Gregory Phipps was glad.

"I shall go up by the midnight mail on Saturday and see Dr. Black on Sunday: then I can be back in time to play on Monday night." Fabyan spoke cheerfully, as though he were in the habit of facing indignant parents and thought nothing of it.

"Whatever will they say?" asked Mrs. Phipps in an awestruck voice.

"My father will be very angry at first, and then he will come round—when he has seen Fabyan," said Rhoda reassuringly.

Gregory Phipps looked at Fabyan and groaned.

But the Reverend Robert Black showed no sign of coming round, though he was quite as angry as anyone had anticipated. To be sure, he had accorded an interview to Fabyan Ross, and had refused to give him his daughter with a plainness of speech that bordered on discourtesy.

During the interview Fabyan caught himself from time to time admiring, in a quite impersonal fashion, the pose and diction and full Scotch voice of this handsome, white-haired old gentleman, who was so plainly under the impression that all actors were rogues and vagabonds. Fabyan Ross could not move him an inch. For the first time in his life he was confronted with a personality to whom his own charm of manner in no way appealed. He felt that he was hurling his own poor little stock of arguments against an iron door, upon which they did in truth resound, but with a hollow, hopeless sort of sound, while the door was not so much as dented.

"And now, sir, let us put an end to this utterly futile interview. You now know my opinions: at my age I am not likely to change them. I am due at my church in half an hour and must beg you to excuse me."

Dr. Black rose and waited.

"May I see Rhoda before I go?" asked Fabyan.

"No, sir, you certainly may not! Nor ever again with my sanction. The sooner she forgets this folly the better, and that end will be more speedily attained if she sees your face no more."

"Rhoda will not forget, Dr. Black. In some respects she is too like you to change her mind easily. Besides, we are not in the Middle Ages: you cannot shut your daughter up in a tower. We love each other, your daughter and I, and if you continue to refuse your consent——" Fabyan paused significantly.

"The tower in which I would immure my daughter, sir, is that of duty and tradition; walls not made with hands, but strong for safety and rectitude of conduct. You probably cannot conceive of what duty means to a girl brought up as my daughter has been."

But the young actor smiled, and there was that look in his eyes

which made Dr. Black wonder if he were wise to deal so peremptorily with him.

"It is because I am so sure of that, Dr. Black, that I can go with a comparatively light heart. Your daughter does not break her plighted word."

The door closed behind Fabyan, and the doctor sat at his study table, leaning his head on his hand, and murmuring, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

The particular work of darkness to which the reverend doctor referred walked back to his hotel and ordered a brandy and soda. Thus fortified he wrote a letter to his lady, which he enclosed under cover to her father, remarking as he sealed the document: "He will either give it to her unopened or send it back before her eyes; but whichever way it is he will be straight about it."

Rhoda was allowed to have the letter.

A month went by. Rhoda regularly did battle with her father each day on the subject of her engagement. For engaged she considered herself, and nothing her father could do or say altered her view of the situation. She neither heard from her lover nor of him except from the newspapers; for since what Dr. Black considered their betrayal of the trust reposed in them, Rhoda had been forbidden to communicate with the Phippses.

Rhoda's eyes were as sweet and honest as ever, her voice as soft, and her ways as kind; but her father felt that this slim, girlish person, daughterly and dutiful in every respect, was opposing against him a quiet force such as he had infrequently encountered during his eminently respectable and somewhat dogmatic life. He knew that his wife sympathised with Rhoda—she too had had her interview with Fabyan Ross—but his wife's opinion had small weight with the doctor, and he believed in the saying, "Give the wind time to blow the man home"—forgetful that all such sayings can be read two ways.

One morning Rhoda saw a short paragraph in the *Scotsman* to the effect that Fabyan Ross had met with a very serious accident in the theatre the night before. For a moment everything grew dark and hazy. Then the girl pulled herself together and went to the mantelpiece to look at the clock. It was a quarter to ten. The express for Euston started at ten twenty-six. Her father was in the study, her mother in the schoolroom: she ran up to her room to put on her hat and coat, went downstairs quietly, and let herself out of the hall door, shutting it carefully after her. At the end of the street she called a cab and drove to the station. She had plenty of money, for she had received her dress allowance from her father the day before. We do not in the least approve of her foolish action, of which only a girl so unsophisticated as Rhoda would have been guilty.

"Where for, miss?" asked the porter.

"Euston," gasped Rhoda, half afraid of her own courage.

"Any luggage, miss?"

"No, no luggage: get me a nice carriage please."

The porter looked surprised; well-dressed young ladies who travel first do not generally go from Edinburgh to London without luggage. Still, the worthy man reflected, it was no business of his, and even if she had "done something" and was fleeing from justice, well, he hoped she would get clean away. For Rhoda's eyes appealed to the porter even as they did to the rest of his kind.

At Carlisle she wired to her parents what she had done and why.

She forgot to have any lunch, and would have reached London fasting but that a fellow-passenger persuaded her to have some tea.

When they reached Euston she called a hansom and gave the address of Fabyan's rooms.

Throughout the journey, even now, as the hansom rolled swiftly through the sunshine of the July evening, Rhoda had never realized herself. She was only conscious of one tremendous need, that of going to her lover to tell him that she had not altered, that now, should he want her, she was there. Her brain held no other thought. The roar of the streets chorused it, the jingling bells of the hansom rang it in her ears, the hoofs of the cab horse beat it out as they smote the wooden paving with dull thud.

Merrick, the grave man-servant, looked astonished at the young lady who demanded breathlessly, "How is Mr. Ross? Will they let me see him?"

"Mr. Ross is at dinner, madam; but I daresay——"

"At dinner?" The Scotch "r" rolled in Rhoda's amazed exclamation. "But the accident?" she continued; "was he not seriously hurt?"

"Oh dear no, madam! Mr. Ross sprained his wrist holding up some scenery that was about to fall; but nothing serious. A report got into the papers, but it was contradicted at once."

"It was in a Scotch newspaper, I saw it," murmured Rhoda, "this morning."

Merrick opened his eyes.

"Won't you step inside, madam, and see Mr. Ross?"

Rhoda drew back.

"Oh, no, thank you! and please do not mention that I was calling. It was a mistake. I am so glad that he is not really hurt."

As she spoke she put out her hand and caught at the side of the door. The evening had suddenly grown very dark, and the roar of London was in her ears. Her knees seemed to give way under her, and her hands seemed very heavy. Merrick caught her by the arm.

"You'd better come in, ma'am, and rest. I'll tell Mr. Ross."

"Oh, please don't! I'm all right now," and turning, Rhoda fled down the steps and went swiftly along the quiet street.

Merrick looked after her and whistled softly. A bell pealed and he hastened back to his master.

"What on earth are you doing, Merrick?" asked Fabyan angrily. "With whom were you parleying all this time?"

"A young lady, sir, to ask for you—said she'd seen an account of your accident in a Scotch newspaper this morning—wouldn't give any name—she seemed rather upset. I asked her to come in but she wouldn't." Merrick spoke in his usual monotonously low, well trained voice, and awaited developments. He had not to wait long, for his master leapt to his feet and rushed bareheaded into the street.

"To your right, sir!" shouted Merrick, hanging out of the window, with a barefaced curiosity such as in all his decorous life he had never betrayed before.

Fabyan Ross tore down the long street, his heart in a tumult of passionate emotion. He realised exactly what had happened. She had come to him, then, this maiden, brave as she was "modest and kind and fair," she had dared the anger of that terrible old Scotch divine, she had thrown *convenances* to the winds, and, having found her sacrifice unnecessary, made no sign.

"I think it must be because I have had nothing to eat all day that my legs feel so queer," said Rhoda to herself as she paused at the end of the terrace in a busier road where there were shops, most of them shut. "I had better telegraph to them at home and go back in a sleeping car."

A hansom passed; she waved, but the man shook his head; he had a fare. She stepped into the entrance of a shop to wait for another. On the other side of the road she saw Fabyan, bareheaded, gazing eagerly up and down the street. Merrick had betrayed her, then. A great rush of thankfulness proved to her how lonely and helpless she had felt. The tears came into her eyes as her lover, regardless of the execrations of a passing 'bus-driver, rushed across the road to join her.

A shop doorway is not an ideal meeting-place, but Fabyan held her hand, saying exultantly, "You have burned your boats—there is no going back!"

"I don't think I want to go back—to-night—if I am not in the way. I am very tired and I want to cry!"

"Don't do that. Let us come and get me a hat." So Rhoda laughed instead. He hailed a passing hansom and put her into it. Together they drove down the long terrace.

"Now what is to be done with you?" asked Fabyan. "Gregory and his wife are out of town, and I am due at the theatre even now; and you, you poor dear, must be fed and rested before you can go back to Edinburgh. First, we must wire to reassure them, and I'll wire to the theatre to tell them that I shall be late."

"I'm afraid I'm a nuisance," said Rhoda in a trembling voice.

"Awful," answered Fabyan, and laughed—that happy laugh of lovers with a leavening of tears.

"Report of accident exaggerated; Rhoda safe with friends, returning to-morrow.—Fabyan Ross." Dr. Black silently handed the telegram to his wife, who burst out crying.

Their silent dinner was over; a meal which for Mrs. Black had been a veritable Barmecide's feast. "I am not at all sure that Rhoda can be allowed to return. She is lost to all sense of both duty and decorum. She has chosen her way in life, let her abide in it—she and her mountebank."

Timid Mrs. Black rose to her feet, saying, "You will have to give in to this marriage finally. It would be better to do it graciously now. If you don't you make us a byword and a laughing-stock. You stand nearly alone in your opinions about the stage."

"This!—from you!" gasped Dr. Black—but the meekest people are the boldest when roused; and Rhoda's mother had suffered much that day. She returned to the attack, saying, "Fabyan Ross is a gentleman. You see he takes no sort of advantage of Rhoda's impulsiveness. He has an assured position, he will make her happy, and if you refuse to allow her to come home I shall go to her to-morrow and stay with her at the Langham until she is married, and I will give her her *trousseau* and attend to her settlements myself."

With these words, Mrs. Black left the room and the doctor, the latter speechless with amazement at this overt act of rebellion on the part of his usually docile wife. He swallowed his indignation as best he could, reflecting that for the first time in all their married life his wife had indirectly reminded him that the bulk of their very considerable income was hers. He also felt his faith in the infallibility of *The Scotsman* to be shaken, and this was very painful.

Rhoda was allowed to return home. Moreover she married her "mountebank" at the beginning of the autumn. The wedding took place in her mother's drawing-room. It was very quiet, all Edinburgh of any importance being at the sea. On the whole people did not blame the Blacks. The times are ripe for a policy of broad-minded toleration.

Fabyan Ross has persuaded a dramatist friend to write him a play in which the leading part is that of an elderly Scotch divine. His mental attitude towards the part is perfect, but Rhoda considers that his accent leaves much to be desired.

L. ALLEN HARKER.

